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The COLLECTED POEMS *of* D. H. LAWRENCE

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D. H. LAWRENCE

COLLECTED POEMS

II.

UNRHYMING POEMS

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LOOK!

WE HAVE COME THROUGH!

ARGUMENT

After much struggling and loss in love and in the world of man, the protagonist throws in his lot with a woman who is already married. Together they go into another country, she perforce leaving her children behind. The conflict of love and hate goes on between the man and the woman, and between these two and the world around them, till it reaches some sort of conclusion.

MOONRISE

And who has seen the moon, who has not seen
Her rise from out the chamber of the deep,
Flushed and grand and naked, as from the chamber
Of finished bridegroom, seen her rise and throw
Confession of delight upon the wave,
Littering the waves with her own superscription
Of bliss, till all her lambent beauty shakes towards us
Spread out and known at last, and we are sure
That beauty is a thing beyond the grave,
That perfect, bright experience never falls
To nothingness, and time will dim the moon
Sooner than our full consummation here
In this odd life will tarnish or pass away.

ELEGY

The sun immense and rosy
Must have sunk and become extinct
The night you closed your eyes for ever against me.

Grey days, and wan, dree dawnings
Since then, with fritter of flowers—
Day wearies me with its ostentation and fawnings.

Still, you left me the nights,
The great dark glittery window,
The bubble hemming this empty existence with lights.

Still in the vast hollow
Like a breath in a bubble spinning
Brushing the stars, goes my soul, that skims the bounds
like a swallow!

I can look through
The film of the bubble night, to where you are.
Through the film I can almost touch you.

Eastwood.

NONENTITY

The stars that open and shut
Fall on my shallow breast
Like stars on a pool.

The soft wind, blowing cool,
Laps little crest after crest
Of ripples across my breast.

And dark grass under my feet
Seems to dabble in me
Like grass in a brook.

Oh, and it is sweet
To be all these things, not to be
Any more myself.

For look,
I am weary of myself!

MARTYR À LA MODE

Ah God, life, law, so many names you keep,
You great, you patient Effort, and you Sleep
That does inform this various dream of living,
You sleep stretched out for ever, ever giving
Us out as dreams, you august Sleep
Coursed round by rhythmic movement of all time,
The constellations, your great heart, the sun
Fierily pulsing, unable to refrain ;
Since you, vast, outstretched, wordless Sleep
Permit of no beyond, ah you, whose dreams
We are, and body of sleep, let it never be said
I quailed at my appointed function, turned poltroon.

For when at night, from out the full surcharge
Of a day's experience, sleep does slowly draw
The harvest, the spent action to itself ;
Leaves me unburdened to begin again ;
At night, I say, when I am gone in sleep,
Does my slow heart rebel, do my dead hands
Complain of what the day has had them do ?

Never let it be said I was poltroon
At this my task of living, this my dream,
This me which rises from the dark of sleep
In white flesh robed to drape another dream,
As lightning comes all white and trembling
From out the cloud of sleep, looks round about
One moment, sees, and swift its dream is over,
In one rich drip it sinks to another sleep,
And sleep thereby is one more dream enrichened.

If so the Vast, the God, the Sleep that still grows richer
Have said that I, this mote in the body of sleep,
Must in my transiency pass all through pain,
Must be a dream of grief, must like a crude
Dull meteorite flash only into light
When tearing through the anguish of this life,
Still in full flight extinct, shall I then turn
Poltroon, and beg the silent, outspread God
To alter my one speck of doom, when round me burns
The whole great conflagration of all life,
Lapped like a body close upon a sleep,
Hiding and covering in the eternal Sleep
Within the immense and toilsome life-time, heaved
With ache of dreams that body forth the Sleep ?

Shall I, less than the least red grain of flesh
Within my body, cry out to the dreaming soul
That slowly labours in a vast travail,
To halt the heart, divert the streaming flow
That carries moons along, and spare the stress
That crushes me to an unseen atom of fire ?

When pain and all
And grief are but the same last wonder, Sleep
Rising to dream in me a small keen dream
Of sudden anguish, sudden over and spent——

Croydon.

DON JUAN

It is Isis the mystery
Must be in love with me.

Here this round ball of earth
Where all the mountains sit
Solemn in groups,
And the bright rivers flit
Round them for girth.

Here the trees and troops
Darken the shining grass,
And many people pass
Plundered from heaven,
Many bright people pass,
Plunder from heaven.

What of the mistresses,
What the beloved seven ?
—They were but witnesses,
I was just driven.

Where is there peace for me ?
Isis the mystery
Must be in love with me.

THE SEA

You, you are all unloving, loveless, you ;
Restless and lonely, shaken by your own moods,
You are celibate and single, scorning a comrade even,
Threshing your own passions with no woman for the threshing-floor,
Finishing your dreams for your own sake only,
Playing your great game around the world, alone,
Without playmate, or helpmate, having no one to cherish,
No one to comfort, and refusing any comforter.

Not like the earth, the spouse all full of increase
Moiled over with the rearing of her many-mouthed young ;
You are single, you are fruitless, phosphorescent, cold and callous,
Naked of worship, of love or of adornment,
Scorning the panacea even of labour,
Sworn to a high and splendid purposelessness
Of brooding and delighting in the secret of life's goings,
Sea, only you are free, sophisticated.

You who toil not, you who spin not,
Surely but for you and your like, toiling
Were not worth while, nor spinning worth the effort !

You who take the moon as in a sieve, and sift
Her flake by flake and spread her meaning out ;
You who roll the stars like jewels in your palm,
So that they seem to utter themselves aloud ;
You who steep from out the days their colour,
Reveal the universal tint that dyes
Their web ; who shadow the sun's great gestures and expressions

So that he seems a stranger in his passing ;
Who voice the dumb night fittingly ;
Sea, you shadow of all things, now mock us to death
with your shadowing.

Bournemouth.

HYMN TO PRIAPUS

My love lies underground
With her face upturned to mine,
And her mouth unclosed in a last long kiss
That ended her life and mine.

I dance at the Christmas party
Under the mistletoe
Along with a ripe, slack country lass
Jostling to and fro.

The big, soft country lass,
Like a loose sheaf of wheat
Slipped through my arms on the threshing floor
At my feet.

The warm, soft country lass,
Sweet as an armful of wheat
At threshing-time broken, was broken
For me, and ah, it was sweet!

Now I am going home
Fulfilled and alone,
I see the great Orion standing
Looking down.

He's the star of my first beloved
Love-making.
The witness of all that bitter-sweet
Heart-aching.

Now he sees this as well,
This last commission.
Nor do I get any look
Of admonition.

He can add the reckoning up
I suppose, between now and then,
Having walked himself in the thorny, difficult
Ways of men.

He has done as I have done
No doubt :
Remembered and forgotten
Turn and about.

My love lies underground
With her face upturned to mine,
And her mouth unclosed in the last long kiss
That ended her life and mine.

She fares in the stark immortal
Fields of death ;
I in these goodly, frozen
Fields beneath.

Something in me remembers
And will not forget.
The stream of my life in the darkness
Deathward set !

And something in me has forgotten,
Has ceased to care.
Desire comes up, and contentment
Is debonair.

I, who am worn and careful,
How much do I care ?
How is it I grin then, and chuckle
Over despair ?

Grief, grief, I suppose and sufficient
Grief makes us free
To be faithless and faithful together
As we have to be.

BALLAD OF A WILFUL WOMAN

First Part

Upon her plodding palfrey
With a heavy child at her breast
And Joseph holding the bridle
They mount to the last hill-crest.

Dissatisfied and weary
She sees the blade of the sea
Dividing earth and heaven
In a glitter of ecstasy.

Sudden a dark-faced stranger,
With his back to the sun, holds out
His arms ; so she lights from her palfrey
And turns her round about.

She has given the child to Joseph,
Gone down to the flashing shore ;
And Joseph, shading his eyes with his hand,
Stands watching evermore.

Second Part

The sea in the stones is singing,
A woman binds her hair
With yellow, frail sea-poppies,
That shine as her fingers stir.

While a naked man comes swiftly
Like a spurt of white foam rent
From the crest of a falling breaker,
Over the poppies sent.

He puts his surf-wet fingers
Over her startled eyes,
And asks if she sees the land, the land,
The land of her glad surmise.

Third Part

Again in her blue, blue mantle
Riding at Joseph's side,
She says, " I went to Cythera,
And woe betide ! "

Her heart is a swinging cradle
That holds the perfect child,
But the shade on her forehead ill becomes
A mother mild.

So on with the slow, mean journey
In the pride of humility ;
Till they halt at a cliff on the edge of the land
Over a sullen sea.

While Joseph pitches the sleep-tent
She goes far down to the shore
To where a man in a heaving boat
Waits with a lifted oar.

Fourth Part

They dwelt in a huge, hoarse sea-cave
And looked far down the dark
Where an archway torn and glittering
Shone like a huge sea-spark.

He said : " Do you see the spirits
Crowding the bright doorway ? "
He said : " Do you hear them whispering ? "
He said : " Do you catch what they say ? "

Fifth Part

Then Joseph, grey with waiting,
His dark eyes full of pain,
Heard : " I have been to Patmos ;
Give me the child again."

Now on with the hopeless journey
Looking bleak ahead she rode,
And the man and the child of no more account
Than the earth the palfrey trode.

Till a beggar spoke to Joseph,
But looked into her eyes ;
So she turned, and said to her husband :
" I give, whoever denies."

Sixth Part

She gave on the open heather
Beneath bare judgment stars,
And she dreamed of her children and Joseph,
And the isles, and her men, and her scars.

And she woke to distil the berries
The beggar had gathered at night,
Whence he drew the curious liquors
He held in delight.

He gave her no crown of flowers,
No child and no palfrey slow,
Only led her through harsh, hard places
Where strange winds blow.

She follows his restless wanderings
Till night when, by the fire's red stain,
Her face is bent in the bitter steam
That comes from the flowers of pain.

Then merciless and ruthless
He takes the flame-wild drops
To the town, and tries to sell them
With the market-crops.

So she follows the cruel journey
That ends not anywhere,
And dreams, as she stirs the mixing-pot,
She is brewing hope from despair.

Trier.

BEI HENNEF

The little river twittering in the twilight,
The wan, wondering look of the pale sky,
This is almost bliss.

And everything shut up and gone to sleep,
All the troubles and anxieties and pain
Gone under the twilight.

Only the twilight now, and the soft " Sh ! " of the river
That will last for ever.

And at last I know my love for you is here ;
I can see it all, it is whole like the twilight,
It is large, so large, I could not see it before,
Because of the little lights and flickers and interruptions,
Troubles, anxieties and pains.

You are the call and I am the answer,
You are the wish, and I the fulfilment,
You are the night, and I the day.
What else ? it is perfect enough.
It is perfectly complete,
You and I,
What more—?

Strange, how we suffer in spite of this !

Hennef am Rhein.

FIRST MORNING

The night was a failure
but why not——?

In the darkness
with the pale dawn seething at the window
through the black frame
I could not be free,
not free myself from the past, those others—
and our love was a confusion,
there was a horror,
you recoiled away from me.

Now, in the morning
As we sit in the sunshine on the seat by the little shrine,
And look at the mountain-walls,
Walls of blue shadow,
And see so near at our feet in the meadow
Myriads of dandelion pappus
Bubbles ravelled in the dark green grass
Held still beneath the sunshine—
It is enough, you are near—
The mountains are balanced,
The dandelion seeds stay half-submerged in the grass ;
You and I together
We hold them proud and blithe
On our love.
They stand upright on our love,
Everything starts from us,
We are the source.

Beuerberg.

"AND OH——
THAT THE MAN I AM
MIGHT CEASE TO BE——"

No, now I wish the sunshine would stop,
and the white shining houses, and the gay red flowers on the balconies
and the bluish mountains beyond, would be crushed out
between two valves of darkness ;
the darkness falling, the darkness rising, with muffled sound
obliterating everything.

I wish that whatever props up the walls of light
would fall, and darkness would come hurling heavily down,
and it would be thick black dark for ever.
Not sleep, which is grey with dreams,
nor death, which quivers with birth,
but heavy, sealing darkness, silence, all immovable.

What is sleep ?
It goes over me, like a shadow over a hill,
but it does not alter me, nor help me.
And death would ache still, I am sure ;
it would be lambent, uneasy.
I wish it would be completely dark everywhere,
inside me, and out, heavily dark
utterly.

Wolfratshausen.

SHE LOOKS BACK

The pale bubbles,
The lovely pale-gold bubbles of the globe-flowers,
In a great swarm clotted and single
Went rolling in the dusk towards the river
To where the sunset hung its wan gold cloths ;
And you stood alone, watching them go,
And that mother-love like a demon drew you from me
Towards England.

Along the road, after nightfall,
Along the glamorous birch-tree avenue
Across the river levels
We went in silence, and you staring to England.

So then there shone within the jungle darkness
Of the long, lush under-grass, a glow-worm's sudden
Green lantern of pure light, a little, intense, fusing triumph,
White and haloed with fire-mist, down in the tangled darkness.
Then you put your hand in mine again, kissed me, and we struggled to be together.
And the little electric flashes went with us, in the grass,
Tiny lighthouses, little souls of lanterns, courage burst into an explosion of green light
Everywhere down in the grass, where darkness was ravelled in darkness.

Still, the kiss was a touch of bitterness on my mouth
Like salt, burning in.
And my hand withered in your hand.
For you were straining with a wild heart, back, back again,
Back to those children you had left behind, to all the æons of the past.
And I was here in the under-dusk of the Isar.

At home, we leaned in the bedroom window
Of the old Bavarian Gasthaus,
And the frogs in the pool beyond thrilled with exuberance,
Like a boiling pot the pond crackled with happiness,
Like a rattle a child spins round for joy, the night rattled
With the extravagance of the frogs,
And you leaned your cheek on mine,
And I suffered it, wanting to sympathise.

At last, as you stood, your white gown falling from your breasts,
You looked into my eyes, and said : " But this is joy ! "
I acquiesced again.
But the shadow of lying was in your eyes,
The mother in you, fierce as a murderess, glaring to England,
Yearning towards England, towards your young children,
Insisting upon your motherhood, devastating.

Still, the joy was there also, you spoke truly,
The joy was not to be driven off so easily ;
Stronger than fear or destructive mother-love, it stood flickering ;
The frogs helped also, whirring away.
Yet how I have learned to know that look in your eyes
Of horrid sorrow !
How I know that glitter of salt,—dry, sterile, sharp, corrosive salt !
Not tears, but white sharp brine
Making hideous your eyes.

I have seen it, felt it in my mouth, my throat, my chest, my belly,
Burning of powerful salt, burning, eating through my defenceless nakedness.
I have been thrust into white, sharp crystals,
Writhing, twisting, superpenetrated.

Ah, Lot's Wife, Lot's Wife !
The pillar of salt, the whirling, horrible column of salt, like a waterspout
That has enveloped me !
Snow of salt, white, burning, eating salt
In which I have writhed.

Lot's Wife !—Not Wife, but Mother.
I have learned to curse your motherhood,
You pillar of salt accursed.
I have cursed motherhood because of you,
Accursed, base motherhood !

I long for the time to come, when the curse against you will have gone out of my heart.
But it has not gone yet.
Nevertheless, once, the frogs, the globe-flowers of Bavaria, the glow-worms
Gave me sweet lymph against the salt-burns,
There is a kindness in the very rain.

Therefore, even in the hour of my deepest, passionate malediction
I try to remember it is also well between us.
That you are with me in the end.
That you never look quite back ; nine-tenths, ah, more
You look round over your shoulder ;
But never quite back.

Nevertheless the curse against you is still in my heart
Like a deep, deep burn.
The curse against all mothers.

All mothers who fortify themselves in motherhood, devastating
the vision.
They are accursed, and the curse is not taken off;
It burns within me like a deep, old burn,
And oh, I wish it was better.

Beuerberg.

ON THE BALCONY

In front of the sombre mountains, a faint, lost ribbon of
rainbow ;
And between us and it, the thunder ;
And down below in the green wheat, the labourers
Stand like dark stumps, still in the green wheat.

You are near to me, and your naked feet in their sandals,
And through the scent of the balcony's naked timber
I distinguish the scent of your hair : so now the limber
Lightning falls from heaven.

Adown the pale-green glacier river floats
A dark boat through the gloom—and whither ?
The thunder roars. But still we have each other !
The naked lightnings in the heavens dither
And disappear—what have we but each other ?
The boat has gone.

Icking.

FROHNLEICHNAM

You have come your way, I have come my way ;
You have stepped across your people, carelessly, hurting them all ;
I have stepped across my people, and hurt them in spite of my care.

But steadily, surely, and notwithstanding
We have come our ways and met at last
Here in this upper room.

Here the balcony
Overhangs the street where the bullock-wagons slowly
Go by with their loads of green and silver birch-trees
For the feast of Corpus Christi.

Here from the balcony
We look over the growing wheat, where the jade-green river
Goes between the pine-woods,
Over and beyond to where the many mountains
Stand in their blueness, flashing with snow and the morning.

I have done ; a quiver of exultation goes through me, like the first
Breeze of the morning through a narrow white birch.
You glow at last like the mountain tops when they catch
Day and make magic in heaven.

At last I can throw away world without end, and meet you
Unsheathed and naked and narrow and white ;
At last you can throw immortality off, and I see you
Glistening with all the moment and all your beauty.

Shameless and callous I love you ;
Out of indifference I love you ;
Out of mockery we dance together,
Out of the sunshine into the shadow,
Passing across the shadow into the sunlight,
Out of sunlight to shadow.

As we dance
Your eyes take all of me in as a communication ;
As we dance
I see you, ah, in full !
Only to dance together in triumph of being together
Two white ones, sharp, vindicated,
Shining and touching,
Is heaven of our own, sheer with repudiation.

IN THE DARK

A BLOTCH of pallor stirs beneath the high
Square picture-dusk, the window of dark sky.

A sound subdued in the darkness : tears !
As if a bird in difficulty up the valley steers.

" Why have you gone to the window ? Why don't you sleep ?
How you have wakened me !—But why, why do you weep ? "

" *I am afraid of you, I am afraid, afraid !*
There is something in you destroys me—— ! "

" You have dreamed and are not awake, come here to me."
" *No, I have wakened. It is you, you are cruel to me !* "

" My dear ! "—" *Yes, yes, you are cruel to me. You cast*
A shadow over my breasts that will kill me at last."

" Come ! "—" *No, I'm a thing of life. I give*
You armfuls of sunshine, and you won't let me live."

" Nay, I'm too sleepy ! "—" *Ah, you are horrible ;*
You stand before me like ghosts, like a darkness upright."

" I ! "—" *How can you treat me so, and love me ?*
My feet have no hold, you take the sky from above me."

" My dear, the night is soft and eternal, no doubt
You love it ! "—" *It is dark, it kills me, I am put out.*"

" My dear, when you cross the street in the sunshine, surely
Your own small night goes with you. Why treat it so poorly ? "

" *No, no, I dance in the sun, I'm a thing of life—*"
" Even then it is dark behind you. Turn round, my wife."

" *No, how cruel you are, you people the sunshine*
With shadows! "—" With yours I people the sunshine, yours
and mine——

" In the darkness we all are gone, we are gone with the trees
And the restless river ;—we are lost and gone with all these."

" *But I am myself, I have nothing to do with these.*"
" Come back to bed, let us sleep on our mysteries.

" Come to me here, and lay your body by mine,
And I will be all the shadow, you the shine.

" Come, you are cold, the night has frightened you.
Hark at the river ! It pants as it hurries through

" The pine-woods. How I love them so, in their mystery of
not-to-be."
"—*But let me be myself, not a river or a tree.*"

" Kiss me ! How cold you are !—Your little breasts
Are bubbles of ice. Kiss me !—You know how it rests

" One to be quenched, to be given up, to be gone in the dark ;
To be blown out, to let night dowse the spark.

" But never mind, my love. Nothing matters, save sleep ;
Save you, and me, and sleep ; all the rest will keep."

MUTILATION

A THICK mist-sheet lies over the broken wheat.
I walk up to my neck in mist, holding my mouth up.
Across there, a discoloured moon burns itself out.

I hold the night in horror ;
I dare not turn round.

To-night I have left her alone.
They would have it I have left her for ever.

Oh my God, how it aches
Where she is cut off from me !

Perhaps she will go back to England.
Perhaps she will go back,
Perhaps we are parted for ever.

If I go on walking through the whole breadth of Germany
I come to the North Sea, or the Baltic.

Over there is Russia--Austria, Switzerland, France, in a circle !
I here in the undermist on the Bavarian road.

It aches in me.
What is England or France, far off,
But a name she might take ?
I don't mind this continent stretching, the sea far away ;
It aches in me for her
Like the agony of limbs cut off and aching ;
Not even longing,
It is only agony.

A cripple !
Oh God, to be mutilated !
To be a cripple !

And if I never see her again ?

I think, if they told me so
I could convulse the heavens with my horror.
I think I could alter the frame of things in my agony.
I think I could break the System with my heart.
I think, in my convulsion, the skies would break.

She too suffers.
But who could compel her, if she chose me against them all ?
She has not chosen me finally, she suspends her choice.
Night folk, Tuatha De Danaan, dark Gods, govern her sleep,
Magnificent ghosts of the darkness, carry off her decision in sleep,
Leave her no choice, make her lapse me-ward, make her,
Oh Gods of the living Darkness, powers of Night.

Wolfratshausen.

HUMILIATION

I HAVE been so innerly proud, and so long alone,
Do not leave me, or I shall break.
Do not leave me.

What should I do if you were gone again
So soon ?
What should I look for ?
Where should I go ?
What should I be, I myself,
" I " ?
What would it mean, this
I ?

Do not leave me.

What should I think of death ?
If I died, it would not be you :
It would be simply the same
Lack of you.
The same want, life or death,
Unfulfilment,
The same insanity of space,
You not there for me.

Think, I daren't die
For fear of the lack in death.
And I daren't live.

Unless there were a morphine or a drug.

I would bear the pain.
But always, strong, unremitting
It would make me not me.

The thing with my body that would go on living
Would not be me.
Neither life nor death could help.

Think, I couldn't look towards death
Nor towards the future :
Only not look.
Only myself
Stand still and bind and blind myself.

God, that I have no choice !
That my own fulfilment is up against me
Timelessly !
The burden of self-accomplishment !
The charge of fulfilment !
And God, that she is *necessary* !
Necessary, and I have no choice !

Do not leave me.

A YOUNG WIFE

The pain of loving you
Is almost more than I can bear.

I walk in fear of you.
The darkness starts up where
You stand, and the night comes through
Your eyes when you look at me.

Ah never before did I see
The shadows that live in the sun !

Now every tall glad tree
Turns round its back to the sun
And looks down on the ground, to see
The shadow it used to shun.

At the foot of each glowing thing
A night lies looking up.

Oh, and I want to sing
And dance, but I can't lift up
My eyes from the shadows : dark
They lie spilt round the cup.

What is it ?—Hark
The faint fine seethe in the air !

Like the seething sound in a shell !
It is death still seething where
The wild-flower shakes its bell
And the skylark twinkles blue—

The pain of loving you
Is almost more than I can bear.

GREEN

The dawn was apple-green,
  The sky was green wine held up in the sun,
The moon was a golden petal between.

She opened her eyes, and green
  They shone, clear like flowers undone
For the first time, now for the first time seen.

Icking.

RIVER ROSES

By the Isar, in the twilight
We were wandering and singing,
By the Isar, in the evening
We climbed the huntsman's ladder and sat swinging
In the fir-tree overlooking the marshes,
While river met with river, and the ringing
Of their pale-green glacier water filled the evening.

By the Isar, in the twilight
We found the dark wild roses
Hanging red at the river ; simmering
Frogs were singing, and over the river closes
Was savour of ice and of roses ; and glimmering
Fear was abroad. We whispered : " No one knows us.
Let it be as the snake disposes
Here in this simmering marsh."

Kloster Schaeftlarn.

GLOIRE DE DIJON

When she rises in the morning
I linger to watch her ;
She spreads the bath-cloth underneath the window
And the sunbeams catch her
Glistening white on the shoulders,
While down her sides the mellow
Golden shadow glows as
She stoops to the sponge, and her swung breasts
Sway like full-blown yellow
Gloire de Dijon roses.

She drips herself with water, and her shoulders
Glisten as silver, they crumple up
Like wet and falling roses, and I listen
For the sluicing of their rain-dishevelled petals.
In the window full of sunlight
Concentrates her golden shadow
Fold on fold, until it glows as
Mellow as the glory roses.

Icking.

ROSES ON THE BREAKFAST TABLE

Just a few of the roses we gathered from the Isar
Are fallen, and their mauve-red petals on the cloth
Float like boats on a river, while other
Roses are ready to fall, reluctant and loth.

She laughs at me across the table, saying
I am beautiful. I look at the rumpled young roses
And suddenly realize, in them as in me,
How lovely is the self this day discloses.

I AM LIKE A ROSE

I AM myself at last ; now I achieve
My very self. I, with the wonder mellow,
Full of fine warmth, I issue forth in clear
And single me, perfected from my fellow.

Here I am all myself. No rose-bush heaving
Its limpid sap to culmination has brought
Itself more sheer and naked out of the green
In stark-clear roses, than I to myself am brought.

ROSE OF ALL THE WORLD

I AM here myself; as though this heave of effort
At starting other life, fulfilled my own:
Rose-leaves that whirl in colour round a core
Of seed-specks kindled lately and softly blown

By all the blood of the rose-bush into being—
Strange, that the urgent will in me, to set
My mouth on hers in kisses, and so softly
To bring together two strange sparks, beget

Another life from our lives, so should send
The innermost fire of my own dim soul out-spinning
And whirling in blossom of flame and being upon me!
That my completion of manhood should be the beginning

Another life from mine! For so it looks.
The seed is purpose, blossom accident.
The seed is all in all, the blossom lent
To crown the triumph of this new descent.

Is that it, woman? Does it strike you so?
The Great Breath blowing a tiny seed of fire
Fans out your petals for excess of flame,
Till all your being smokes with fine desire?

Or are we kindled, you and I, to be
One rose of wonderment upon the tree
Of perfect life, and is our possible seed
But the residuum of the ecstasy?

How will you have it?—the rose is all in all,
Or the ripe rose-fruits of the luscious fall?
The sharp begetting, or the child begot?
Our consummation matters, or does it not?

To me it seems the seed is just left over
From the red rose-flowers' fiery transience ;
Just orts and slarts ; berries that smoulder in the bush
Which burnt just now with marvellous immanence.

Blossom, my darling, blossom, be a rose
Of roses unchidden and purposeless ; a rose
For rosiness only, without an ulterior motive ;
For me it is more than enough if the flower unclose.

A YOUTH MOWING

THERE are four men mowing down by the Isar ;
I can hear the swish of the scythe-strokes, four
Sharp breaths taken : yea, and I
Am sorry for what's in store.

The first man out of the four that's mowing
Is mine, I claim him once and for all ;
Though it's sorry I am, on his young feet, knowing
None of the trouble he's led to stall.

As he sees me bringing the dinner, he lifts
His head as proud as a deer that looks
Shoulder-deep out of the corn ; and wipes
His scythe-blade bright, unhooks

The scythe-stone and over the stubble to me.
Lad, thou hast gotten a child in me,
Laddie, a man thou'lt ha'e to be,
Yea, though I'm sorry for thee.

QUITE FORSAKEN

What pain, to wake and miss you!
To wake with a tightened heart,
And mouth reaching forward to kiss you!

This then at last is the dawn, and the bell
Clanging at the farm! Such bewilderment
Comes with the sight of the room, I cannot tell.

It is raining. Down the half-obscure road
Four labourers pass with their scythes
Dejectedly;—a huntsman goes by with his load:

A gun, and a bunched-up deer, its four little feet
Clustered dead.—And this is the dawn
For which I wanted the night to retreat!

FORSAKEN AND FORLORN

The house is silent, it is late at night, I am alone.
From the balcony
I can hear the Isar moan
Can see the white
Rift of the river eerily, between the pines, under a sky of stone.

Some fireflies drift through the middle air
Tinily.
I wonder where
Ends this darkness that annihilates me.

FIREFLIES IN THE CORN

She speaks.

Look at the little darlings in the corn !
  The rye is taller than you, who think yourself
So high and mighty : look how the heads are borne
  Dark and proud on the sky, like a number of knights
Passing with spears and pennants and manly scorn.

Knights indeed !—much knight I know will ride
  With his head held high-serene against the sky !
Limping and following rather at my side
  Moaning for me to love him !—O darling rye
How I adore you for your simple pride !

And the dear, dear fireflies wafting in between
  And over the swaying corn-stalks, just above
All the dark-feathered helmets, like little green
  Stars come low and wandering here for love
Of these dark knights, shedding their delicate sheen !

I thank you I do, you happy creatures, you dears,
  Riding the air, and carrying all the time
Your little lanterns behind you ! Ah, it cheers
  My soul to see you settling and trying to climb
The corn-stalks, tipping with fire the spears.

All over the dim corn's motion, against the blue
  Dark sky of night, a wandering glitter, a swarm
Of questing brilliant souls going out with their true
  Proud knights to battle ! Sweet, how I warm
My poor, my perished soul with the sight of you !

A DOE AT EVENING

As I went through the marshes
a doe sprang out of the corn
and flashed up the hill-side
leaving her fawn.

On the sky-line
she moved round to watch,
she pricked a fine black blotch
on the sky.

I looked at her
and felt her watching ;
I became a strange being.
Still, I had my right to be there with her.

Her nimble shadow trotting
along the sky-line, she
put back her fine, level-balanced head.
And I knew her.

Ah yes, being male, is not my head hard-balanced,
antlered ?
Are not my haunches light ?
Has she not fled on the same wind with me ?
Does not my fear cover her fear ?

Irschenhausen.

SONG OF A MAN WHO IS NOT LOVED

The space of the world is immense, before me and around me ;
If I turn quickly, I am terrified, feeling space surround me ;
Like a man in a boat on very clear, deep water, space frightens
and confounds me.

I see myself isolated in the universe, and wonder
What effect I can have. My hands wave under
The heavens like specks of dust that are floating asunder.

I hold myself up, and feel a big wind blowing
Me like a gadfly into the dusk, without my knowing
Whither or why or even how I am going.

So much there is outside me, so infinitely
Small am I, what matter if minutely
I beat my way, to be lost immediately ?

How shall I flatter myself that I can do
Anything in such immensity ? I am too
Little to count in the wind that drifts me through.

Glashütte.

SINNERS

The big mountains sit still in the afternoon light,
Shadows in their lap ;
The bees roll round in the wild-thyme with delight.

We sitting here among the cranberries
So still in the gap
Of rock, distilling our memories,

Are sinners ! Strange ! The bee that blunders
Against me goes off with a laugh.
A squirrel cocks his head on the fence, and wonders

What about sin ?—For, it seems
The mountains have
No shadow of us on their snowy forehead of dreams

As they ought to have. They rise above us
Dreaming
For ever. One even might think that they love us.

Little red cranberries cheek to cheek,
Two great dragon-flies wrestling ;
You, with your forehead nestling
Against me, and bright peak shining to peak—

There's a love-song for you !—Ah, if only
There were no teeming
Swarms of mankind in the world, and we were less lonely!

Mayrhofen.

MISERY

Out of this oubliette between the mountains
five valleys go, five passes like gates ;
three of them black in shadow, two of them bright
with distant sunshine ;
and sunshine fills one high valley bed,
green grass shining, and little white houses
like quartz crystals,
little, but distinct a way off.

Why don't I go ?
Why do I crawl about this pot, this oubliette,
stupidly ?
Why don't I go ?

But where ?
If I come to a pine-wood, I can't say :
Now I am arrived !
What are so many straight trees to me !

Sterzing.

EVERLASTING FLOWERS

For a Dead Mother

Who do you think stands watching
The snow-tops shining rosy
In heaven, now that the darkness
Takes all but the tallest posy ?

Who then sees the two-winged
Boat down there, all alone
And asleep on the snow's last shadow,
Like a moth on a stone ?

The olive-leaves, light as gad-flies,
Have all gone dark, gone black.
And now in the dark my soul to you
Turns back.

To you, my little darling,
To you, out of Italy.
For what is loveliness, my love,
Save you have it with me !

So, there's an oxen wagon
Comes darkly into sight :
A man with a lantern, swinging
A little light.

What does he see, my darling,
Here by the darkened lake ?
Here, in the sloping shadow
The mountains make ?

He says not a word, but passes,
    Staring at what he sees.
What ghost of us both do you think he saw
    Under the olive-trees ?

All the things that are lovely—
    The things you never knew—
I wanted to gather them one by one
    And bring them to you.

But never now, my darling,
    Can I gather the mountain-tips
From the twilight like half-shut lilies
    To hold to your lips.

And never the two-winged vessel
    That sleeps below on the lake
Can I catch like a moth between my hands
    For you to take.

But hush, I am not regretting :
    It is far more perfect now.
I'll whisper the ghostly truth to you
    And tell you how

I know you here in the darkness,
    How you sit in the throne of my eyes
At peace, and look out of the windows
    In glad surprise.

Lago di Garda.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON IN ITALY

The man and the maid go side by side
With an interval of space between ;
And his hands are awkward and want to hide,
She braves it out since she must be seen.

When some one passes he drops his head,
Shading his face in his black felt hat,
While the hard girl hardens ; nothing is said,
There is nothing to wonder or cavil at.

Alone on the open road again,
With the mountain snows across the lake
Flushing the afternoon, they are uncomfortable,
The loneliness daunts them, their stiff throats ache.

And he sighs with relief when she parts from him ;
Her proud head held in its black silk scarf
Gone under the archway, home, he can join
The men that lounge in a group on the wharf.

His evening is a flame of wine
Among the eager, cordial men.
And she with her women hot and hard
Moves at her ease again.

She is marked, she is singled out
For the fire :
The brand is upon him, look you !
Of desire.

They are chosen, ah, they are fated
For the fight !
Champion her, all you women ! Men, menfolk,
Hold him your light !

Nourish her, train her, harden her,
Women all!
Fold him, be good to him, cherish him,
Men, ere he fall.

Women, another champion!
This, men, is yours!
Wreathe and enlap and anoint them
Behind separate doors.

Gargnano.

WINTER DAWN

Green star Sirius
Dribbling over the lake ;
The stars have gone so far on their road,
Yet we're awake !

Without a sound
The new young year comes in
And is half-way over the lake.
We must begin

Again. This love so full
Of hate has hurt us so,
We lie side by side
Moored—but no,

Let me get up
And wash quite clean
Of this hate.—
So green

The great star goes !
I am washed quite clean,
Quite clean of it all.
But e'en

So cold, so cold and clean
Now the hate is gone !
It is all no good,
I am chilled to the bone

Now the hate is gone ;
There is nothing left ;
I am pure like bone,
Of all feeling bereft.

A BAD BEGINNING

The yellow sun steps over the mountain-top
And falters a few short steps across the lake—
Are you awake ?

See, glittering on the milk-blue, morning lake
They are laying the golden racing-track of the sun ;
The day has begun.

The sun is in my eyes, I must get up.
I want to go, there's a gold road blazes before
My breast—which is so sore.

What?—your throat is bruised, bruised with my kisses ?
Ah, but if I am cruel what then are you ?
I am bruised right through.

What if I love you !—This misery
Of your dissatisfaction and misprision
Stupefies me.

Ah yes, your open arms ! Ah yes, ah yes,
You would take me to your breast !—But no,
You should come to mine,
It were better so.

Here I am—get up and come to me !
Not as a visitor either, nor a sweet
And winsome child of innocence ; nor
As an insolent mistress telling my pulse's beat.

Come to me like a woman coming home
To the man who is her husband, all the rest
Subordinate to this, that he and she
Are joined together for ever, as is best.

Behind me on the lake I hear the steamer drumming
From Austria. There lies the world, and here
Am I. Which way are you coming ?

WHY DOES SHE WEEP?

Hush then
why do you cry ?
It's you and me
the same as before.

If you hear a rustle
it's only a rabbit
gone back to his hole
in a bustle.

If something stirs in the branches
overhead, it will be a squirrel moving
uneasily, disturbed by the stress
of our loving.

Why should you cry then ?
Are you afraid of God
in the dark ?

I'm not afraid of God.
Let him come forth.
If he is hiding in the cover
let him come forth.

Now in the cool of the day
it is we who walk in the trees
and call to God " Where art thou ? "
And it is he who hides.

Why do you cry ?
My heart is bitter.
Let God come forth to justify
himself now.

Why do you cry ?
Is it Wehmut, ist dir weh ?
Weep then, yea
for the abomination of our old righteousness.

We have done wrong
many times ;
but this time we begin to do right.

Weep then, weep
for the abomination of our past righteousness.
God will keep
hidden, he won't come forth.

GIORNO DEI MORTI

Along the avenue of cypresses,
All in their scarlet cloaks and surplices
Of linen, go the chanting choristers,
The priests in gold and black, the villagers. . . .

And all along the path to the cemetery
The round dark heads of men crowd silently,
And black-scarved faces of womenfolk, wistfully
Watch at the banner of death, and the mystery.

And at the foot of a grave a father stands
With sunken head, and forgotten, folded hands ;
And at the foot of a grave a mother kneels
With pale shut face, nor either hears nor feels

The coming of the chanting choristers
Between the avenue of cypresses,
The silence of the many villagers,
The candle-flames beside the surplices.

ALL SOULS

They are chanting now the service of All the Dead
And the village folk outside in the burying-ground
Listen—except those who strive with their dead,
Reaching out in anguish, yet unable quite to touch them :
Those villagers isolated at the grave
Where the candles burn in the daylight, and the painted
wreaths
Are propped on end, there, where the mystery starts.

The naked candles burn on every grave.
On your grave, in England, the weeds grow.

But I am your naked candle burning,
And that is not your grave, in England,
The world is your grave.
And my naked body standing on your grave
Upright towards heaven is burning off to you
Its flame of life, now and always, till the end.

It is my offering to you ; every day is All Souls' Day.

I forget you, have forgotten you.
I am busy only at my burning,
I am busy only at my life.
But my feet are on your grave, planted.
And when I lift my face, it is a flame that goes up
To the other world, where you are now.
But I am not concerned with you.
I have forgotten you.

I am a naked candle burning on your grave.

LADY WIFE

Ah yes, I know you well, a sojourner
At the hearth ;
I know right well the marriage ring you wear,
And what it's worth.

The angels came to Abraham, and they stayed
In his house awhile ;
So you to mine, I imagine ; yes, happily
Condescend to be vile.

I see you all the time, you bird-blithe, lovely
Angel in disguise.
I see right well how I ought to be grateful,
Smitten with reverent surprise.

Listen, I have no use
For so rare a visit ;
Mine is a common devil's
Requisite.

Rise up and go, I have no use for you
And your blithe, glad mien.
No angels here, for me no goddesses,
Nor any Queen.

Put ashes on your head, put sackcloth on
And learn to serve.
You have fed me with your sweetness, now I am sick,
As I deserve.

Queens, ladies, angels, women rare,
I have had enough.
Put sackcloth on, be crowned with powdery ash,
Be common stuff.

And serve now, woman, serve, as a woman should,
Implicitly.
Since I must serve and struggle with the imminent
Mystery.

Serve then, I tell you, add your strength to mine,
Take on this doom.
What are you by yourself, do you think, and what
The mere fruit of your womb ?

What is the fruit of your womb then, you mother, you queen,
When it falls to the ground ?
Is it more than the apples of Sodom you scorn so, the men
Who abound ?

Bring forth the sons of your womb then, and put them
Into the fire
Of Sodom that covers the earth ; bring them forth
From the womb of your precious desire.

You woman most holy, you mother, you being beyond
Question or diminution,
Add yourself up, and your seed, to the nought
Of your last solution.

BOTH SIDES OF THE MEDAL

And because you love me,
think you you do not hate me ?
Ha, since you love me
to ecstasy
t follows you hate me to ecstasy.

Because when you hear me
go down the road outside the house
you must come to the window to watch me go,
lo you think it is pure worship ?

Because, when I sit in the room,
here, in my own house,
nd you want to enlarge yourself with this friend of mine,
uch a friend as he is,
et you cannot get beyond your awareness of me,
ou are held back by my being in the same world with you,
lo you think it is bliss alone ?
heer harmony ?

No doubt if I were dead, you must
each into death after me,
ut would not your hate reach even more madly than your
love ?
our impassioned, unfinished hate ?

ince you have a passion for me,
s I for you,
oes not that passion stand in your way like a Balaam's ass ?
nd am I not Balaam's ass
olden-mouthed occasionally ?
ut mostly, do you not detest my bray ?

Since you are confined in the orbit of me
do you not loathe the confinement ?
Is not even the beauty and peace of an orbit
an intolerable prison to you,
as it is to everybody ?

But we will learn to submit
each of us to the balanced, eternal orbit
wherein we circle on our fate
in strange conjunction.

What is chaos, my love ?
It is not freedom.
A disarray of falling stars coming to nought.

LOGGERHEADS

Please yourself how you have it.
Take my words, and fling
Them down on the counter roundly ;
See if they ring.

Sift my looks and expressions,
And see what proportion there is
Of sand in my doubtful sugar
Of verities.

Have a real stock-taking
Of my manly breast ;
Find out if I'm sound or bankrupt,
Or a poor thing at best.

For I am quite indifferent
To your dubious state,
As to whether you've found a fortune
In me, or a flea-bitten fate.

Make a good investigation
Of all that is there,
And then, if it's worth it, be grateful—
If not, then despair.

If despair is our portion
Then let us despair.
Let us make for the weeping willow.
I don't care.

DECEMBER NIGHT

Take off your cloak and your hat
And your shoes, and draw up at my hearth
Where never woman sat.

I have made the fire up bright;
Let us leave the rest in the dark
And sit by firelight.

The wine is warm in the hearth;
The flickers come and go.
I will warm your limbs with kisses
Until they glow.

NEW YEAR'S EVE

THERE are only two things now,
The great black night scooped out
And this fireglow.

This fireglow, the core,
And we the two ripe pips
That are held in store.

Listen, the darkness rings
As it circulates round our fire.
Take off your things.

Your shoulders, your bruised throat!
Your breasts, your nakedness!
This fiery coat!

As the darkness flickers and dips,
As the firelight falls and leaps
From your feet to your lips!

NEW YEAR'S NIGHT

Now you are mine, to-night at last I say it ;
You're a dove I have bought for sacrifice,
And to-night I slay it.

Here in my arms my naked sacrifice !
Death, do you hear, in my arms I am bringing
My offering, bought at great price.

She's a silvery dove worth more than all I've got.
Now I offer her up to the ancient, inexorable God,
Who knows me not.

Look, she's a wonderful dove, without blemish or spot !
I sacrifice all in her, my last of the world,
Pride, strength, all the lot.

All, all on the altar ! And death swooping down
Like a falcon. 'Tis God has taken the victim ;
I have won my renown.

VALENTINE'S NIGHT

You shadow and flame,
You interchange,
You death in the game!

Now I gather you up,
Now I put you back
Like a poppy in its cup.

And so, you are a maid
Again, my darling, but new,
Unafraid.

My love, my blossom, a child
Almost! The flower in the bud
Again, undefiled.

And yet, a woman, knowing
All, good, evil, both
In one blossom blowing.

BIRTH NIGHT

This fireglow is a red womb
In the night, where you're folded up
On your doom.

And the ugly, brutal years
Are dissolving out of you,
And the stagnant tears.

I the great vein that leads
From the night to the source of you
Which the sweet blood feeds.

New phase in the germ of you ;
New sunny streams of blood
Washing you through.

You are born again of me.
I, Adam, from the veins of me
The Eve that is to be.

What has been long ago
Grows dimmer, we both forget,
We no longer know.

You are lovely, your face is soft
Like a flower in bud
On a mountain croft.

This is Noel for me.
To-night is a woman born
Of the man in me.

RABBIT SNARED IN THE NIGHT

Why do you spurt and sprottle
like that, bunny ?
Why should I want to throttle
you, bunny ?

Yes, bunch yourself between
my knees and lie still.
Lie on me with a hot, plumb, live weight,
heavy as a stone, passive,
yet hot, waiting.

What are you waiting for ?
What are you waiting for ?
What is the hot, plumb weight of your desire on me ?
You have a hot, unthinkable desire of me, bunny.

What is that spark
glittering at me on the unutterable darkness
of your eye, bunny ?
The finest splinter of a spark
that you throw off, straight on the tinder of my nerves !

It sets up a strange fire,
a soft, most unwarrantable burning,
a bale-fire mounting, mounting up in me.

'Tis not of me, bunny.
It was you engendered it,
with that fine, demoniacal spark
you jetted off your eye at me.

I did not want it,
this furnace, this draught-maddened fire
which mounts up my arms
making them swell with turgid, ungovernable strength.

'Twas not *I* that wished it.
that my fingers should turn into these flames
avid and terrible
that they are at this moment.

It must have been *your* inbreathing, gaping desire
that drew this red gush in me ;
I must be reciprocating *your* vacuous, hideous passion.

It must be the want in you
that has drawn this terrible draught of white fire
up my veins as up a chimney.

It must be you who desire
this intermingling of the black and monstrous fingers of
Moloch
in the blood-jets of your throat.

Come, you shall have your desire,
since already I am implicated with you
in your strange lust.

PARADISE RE-ENTERED

Through the strait gate of passion,
Between the bickering fire
Where flames of fierce love tremble
On the body of fierce desire :

To the intoxication,
The mind, fused down like a bead,
Flees in its agitation
The flames' stiff speed :

At last to calm incandescence,
Burned clean by remorseless hate,
Now, at the day's renascence
We approach the gate.

Now, from the darkened spaces
Of fear, and of frightened faces,
Death, in our awed embraces
Approached and passed by ;

We near the flame-burnt porches
Where the brands of the angels, like torches,
Whirl,—in these perilous marches
Pausing to sigh ;

We look back on the withering roses,
The stars, in their sun-dimmed closes,
Where 'twas given us to repose us
Sure on our sanctity ;

Beautiful, candid lovers,
Burnt out of our earthly covers,
We might have nestled like plovers
In the fields of eternity.

There, sure in sinless being,
All-seen, and then all-seeing,
In us life unto death agreeing,
We might have lain.

But we storm the angel-guarded
Gates of the long-discarded
Garden, which God has hoarded
Against our pain.

The Lord of Hosts and the Devil
Are left on Eternity's level
Field, and as victors we travel
To Eden home.

Back beyond good and evil
Return we. Eve dishevel
Your hair for the bliss-drenched revel
On our primal loam.

COMING AWAKE

'HEN I woke, the lake-lights were quivering on the wall,
The sunshine swam in a shoal across and across,
nd a hairy, big bee hung over the primulas
In the window, his body black fur, and the sound of him
cross.

here was something I ought to remember : and yet
I did not remember. Why should I ? The running lights
nd the airy primulas, oblivious
Of the impending bee—they were fair enough sights.

SPRING MORNING

Ah, through the open door
Is there an almond-tree
Aflame with blossom !
—Let us fight no more.

Among the pink and blue
Of the sky and the almond flowers
A sparrow flutters.
—We have come through,

It is really spring !—See,
When he thinks himself alone
How he bullies the flowers.
—Ah, you and me

How happy we'll be !—See him ?
He clouts the tufts of flowers
In his impudence.
—But, did you dream

It would be so bitter ? Never mind,
It is finished, the spring is here.
And we're going to be summer-happy
And summer-kind.

We have died, we have slain and been slain,
We are not our old selves any more.
I feel new and eager
To start again.

It is gorgeous to live and forget.
And to feel quite new.
See the bird in the flowers ?—he's making
A rare to-do !

He thinks the whole blue sky
Is much less than the bit of blue egg
He's got in his nest—we'll be happy,
    You and I, I and you.

With nothing to fight any more—
In each other, at least.
See, how gorgeous the world is
    Outside the door!

San Gaudenzio.

WEDLOCK

I

Come, my little one, closer up against me,
Creep right up, with your round head pushed in my breast.

How I love all of you ! Do you feel me wrap you
Up with myself and my warmth, like a flame round the wick ?

And how I am not at all, except a flame that mounts off you.
Where I touch you, I flame into being ;—but is it me, or you ?

That round head pushed in my chest, like a nut in its socket,
And I the swift bracts that sheathe it : those breasts, those
thighs and knees,

Those shoulders so warm and smooth : I feel that I
Am a sunlight upon them, that shines them into being.

But how lovely to be you ! Creep closer in, that I am more.
I spread over you ! How lovely, your round head, your arms,

Your breasts, your knees and feet ! I feel that we
Are a bonfire of oneness, me flame flung leaping round you,
You the core of the fire, crept into me.

II

And oh, my little one, you whom I enfold,
How quaveringly I depend on you, to keep me alive
Like a flame on a wick !

I, the man who enfolds you and holds you close,
How my soul cleaves to your bosom as I clasp you,
The very quick of my being !

Suppose you didn't want me ! I should sink down
Like a light that has no sustenance
And sinks low.

Cherish me, my tiny one, cherish me who enfold
you.
Nourish me, and endue me, I am only of you;
I am your issue.

How full and big like a robust, happy flame
When I enfold you, and you creep into me,
And my life is fierce at its quick
Where it comes off you !

III

My little one, my big one,
My bird, my brown sparrow in my breast.
My squirrel clutching in to me ;
My pigeon, my little one, so warm,
So close, breathing so still.

My little one, my big one,
I, who am so fierce and strong, enfolding you,
If you start away from my breast, and leave
me,
How suddenly I shall go down into nothing
Like a flame that falls of a sudden.

And you will be before me, tall and towering,
And I shall be wavering uncertain
Like a sunken flame that grasps for support.

IV

But now I am full and strong and certain
With you there firm at the core of me
Keeping me.

How sure I feel, how warm and strong and happy
For the future ! How sure the future is within me
I am like a seed with a perfect flower enclosed.

I wonder what it will be,
What will come forth of us.
What flower, my love ?

No matter, I am so happy,
I feel like a firm, rich, healthy root,
Rejoicing in what is to come.

How I depend on you utterly,
My little one, my big one !
How everything that will be, will not be of me,
Nor of either of us,
But of both of us.

V

And think, there will something come forth from us,
We two, folded so small together,
There will something come forth from us.
Children, acts, utterance,
Perhaps only happiness.

Perhaps only happiness will come forth from us.
Old sorrow, and new happiness.
Only that one newness.

But that is all I want.
And I am sure of that.
We are sure of that.

VI

And yet all the while you are you, you are not me.
And I am I, I am never you.
How awfully distinct and far off from each other's being
we are!

Yet I am glad.
I am so glad there is always you beyond my scope,
Something that stands over,
Something I shall never be,
That I shall always wonder over, and wait for,
Look for like the breath of life as long as I live,
Still waiting for you, however old you are, and I am,
I shall always wonder over you, and look for you.

And you will always be with me.
I shall never cease to be filled with newness,
Having you near me.

HISTORY

The listless beauty of the hour
When snow fell on the apple-trees
And the wood-ash gathered in the fire
And we faced our first miseries.

Then the sweeping sunshine of noon
When the mountains like chariot cars
Were ranked to blue battle—and you and I
Counted our scars.

And then in a strange, grey hour
We lay mouth to mouth, with your face
Under mine like a star on the lake,
And I covered the earth, and all space.

The silent, drifting hours
Of morn after morn
And night drifting up to the night
Yet no pathway worn.

Your life, and mine, my love
Passing on and on, the hate
Fusing closer and closer with love
Till at length they mate.

The Cearne.

SONG OF A MAN WHO IS LOVED

Between her breasts is my home, between her breasts.
Three sides set on me space and fear, but the fourth side rests
Sure and a tower of strength, 'twixt the walls of her breasts.

Having known the world so long, I have never confessed
How it impresses me, how hard and compressed
Rocks seem, and earth, and air uneasy, and waters still ebbing west.

All things on the move, going their own little ways, and all
Jostling, people touching and talking and making small
Contacts and bouncing off again, bounce ! bounce like a ball !

My flesh is weary with bounce and gone again !—
My ears are weary with words that bounce on them, and then
Bounce off again, meaning nothing. Assertions ! Assertions ! stones, women and men !

Between her breasts is my home, between her breasts.
Three sides set on me chaos and bounce, but the fourth side rests
Sure on a haven of peace, between the mounds of her breasts.

I am that I am, and no more than that : but so much
I am, nor will I be bounced out of it. So at last I touch
All that I am-not in softness, sweet softness, for she is such.

And the chaos that bounces and rattles like shrapnel, at least
Has for me a door into peace, warm dawn in the east
Where her bosom softens towards me, and the turmoil has
ceased.

So I hope I shall spend eternity
With my face down buried between her breasts ;
And my still heart full of security,
And my still hands full of her breasts.

SONG OF A MAN WHO HAS COME THROUGH

Not I, not I, but the wind that blows through me !
A fine wind is blowing the new direction of Time.
If only I let it bear me, carry me, if only it carry me !
If only I am sensitive, subtle, oh, delicate, a winged gift !
If only, most lovely of all, I yield myself and am borrowed
By the fine, fine wind that takes its course through the chaos
of the world
Like a fine, an exquisite chisel, a wedge-blade inserted ;
If only I am keen and hard like the sheer tip of a wedge
Driven by invisible blows,
The rock will split, we shall come at the wonder, we shall find
the Hesperides.

Oh, for the wonder that bubbles into my soul,
I would be a good fountain, a good well-head,
Would blur no whisper, spoil no expression.

What is the knocking ?
What is the knocking at the door in the night ?
It is somebody wants to do us harm.

No, no, it is the three strange angels.
Admit them, admit them.

ONE WOMAN TO ALL WOMEN

I DON'T care whether I am beautiful to you,
You other women.
Nothing of me that you see is my own ;
A man balances, bone unto bone
Balances, everything thrown
In the scale, you other women.

You may look and say to yourselves, I do
Not show like the rest.
My face may not please you, nor my stature ; yet if you knew
How happy I am, how my heart in the wind rings true
Like a bell that is chiming, each stroke as a stroke falls due,
You other women :

You would draw your mirror towards you, you would wish
To be different.
There's the beauty you cannot see, myself and him
Balanced in glorious equilibrium,
The swinging beauty of equilibrium,
You other women.

There's this other beauty, the way of the stars,
You straggling women.
If you knew how I swerve in peace, in the equipoise
With the man, if you knew how my flesh enjoys
The swinging bliss no shattering ever destroys,
You other women :

You would envy me, you would think me wonderful
Beyond compare ;
You would weep to be lapsing on such harmony
As carries me, you would wonder aloud that he
Who is so strange should correspond with me
Everywhere.

You see he is different, he is dangerous,
Without pity or love.
And yet how his separate being liberates me
And gives me peace! You cannot see
How the stars are moving in surety
Exquisite, high above.

We move without knowing, we sleep, and we travel on,
You other women.
And this is beauty to me, to be lifted and gone
In a motion human inhuman, two and one
Encompassed, and many reduced to none,
You other women.

Kensington.

PEOPLE

The great gold apples of night
Hang from the street's long bough
Dripping their light
On the faces that drift below,
On the faces that drift and blow
Down the night-time, out of sight
In the wind's sad sough.

The ripeness of these apples of night
Distilling over me
Makes sickening the white
Ghost-flux of faces that hie
Them endlessly, endlessly by
Without meaning or reason why
They ever should be.

STREET LAMPS

Gold, with an innermost speck
Of silver, singing afloat
Beneath the night,
Like balls of thistledown
Wandering up and down
Over the whispering town
Seeking where to alight!

Slowly, above the street,
Above the ebb of feet
Drifting in flight;
Still, in the purple distance
The gold of their strange persistence
As they cross and part and meet
And pass out of sight!

The seed-ball of the sun
Is broken at last, and done
Is the orb of day.
Now to their separate ends
Seed after day-seed wends
A separate way.

No sun will ever rise
Again on the wonted skies
In the midst of the spheres.
The globe of the day, over-ripe,
Is shattered at last beneath the stripe
Of the wind, and its oneness veers
Out myriad-wise.

Seed after seed after seed
Drifts over the town, in its need
To sink and have done ;
To settle at last in the dark,
To bury its weary spark
Where the end is begun.

Darkness, and depth of sleep,
Nothing to know or to weep
Where the seed sinks in
To the earth of the under-night
Where all is silent, quite
Still, and the darknesses steep
Out all the sin.

"SHE SAID AS WELL TO ME"

She said as well to me : " Why are you ashamed ?
That little bit of your chest that shows between
he gap of your shirt, why cover it up ?
Why shouldn't your legs and your good strong thighs
e rough and hairy ?—I'm glad they are like that.
You are shy, you silly, you silly shy thing.
Men are the shyest creatures, they never will come
ut of their covers. Like any snake
lipping into its bed of dead leaves, you hurry into your clothes.
And I love you so ! Straight and clean and all of a piece is the
body of a man,
uch an instrument, a spade, like a spear, or an oar,
uch a joy to me—"
o she laid her hands and pressed them down my sides,
o that I began to wonder over myself, and what I was.

he said to me : " What an instrument, your body !
ingle and perfectly distinct from everything else !
What a tool in the hands of the Lord !
nly God could have brought it to its shape.
t feels as if his handgrasp, wearing you
ad polished you and hollowed you,
ollowed this groove in your sides, grasped you under the
breasts
nd brought you to the very quick of your form,
ubtler than an old, soft-worn fiddle-bow.

When I was a child, I loved my father's riding-whip
hat he used so often.
loved to handle it, it seemed like a near part of him.
o I did his pens, and the jasper seal on his desk.
omething seemed to surge through me when I touched them.

" So it is with you, but here
The joy I feel !
God knows what I feel, but it is joy !
Look, you are clean and fine and singled out !
I admire you so, you are beautiful : this clean sweep of your
sides, this firmness, this hard mould !
I would die rather than have it injured with one scar.
I wish I could grip you like the fist of the Lord,
and have you—"

So she said, and I wondered,
feeling trammelled and hurt.
It did not make me free.

Now I say to her : " No tool, no instrument, no God !
Don't touch me and appreciate me.
It is an infamy.
You would think twice before you touched a weasel on a fence
as it lifts its straight white throat.
Your hand would not be so flig and easy.
Nor the adder we saw asleep with her head on her shoulder
curled up in the sunshine like a princess ;
when she lifted her head in delicate, startled wonder
you did not stretch forward to caress her
though she looked rarely beautiful
and a miracle as she glided delicately away, with such dignity.
And the young bull in the field, with his wrinkled, sad face,
you are afraid if he rises to his feet,
though he is all wistful and pathetic, like a monolith, arrested,
static.

" Is there nothing in me to make you hesitate ?
I tell you there is all these.
And why should you overlook them in me ?— "

NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH

I

And so I cross into another world
shyly and in homage linger for an invitation
from this unknown that I would trespass on.

I am very glad, and all alone in the world,
all alone, and very glad, in a new world
where I am disembarked at last.

I could cry with joy, because I am in the new world, just ventured in.
I could cry with joy, and quite freely, there is nobody to know.

And whosoever the unknown people of this unknown world may be
they will never understand my weeping for joy to be adventuring among them
because it will still be a gesture of the old world I am making
which they will not understand, because it is quite, quite foreign to them.

II

I was so weary of the world,
I was so sick of it,
everything was tainted with myself,
skies, trees, flowers, birds, water,
people, houses, streets, vehicles, machines,
nations, armies, war, peace-talking,
work. recreation, governing, anarchy,
it was all tainted with myself, I knew it all to start with
because it was all myself.

When I gathered flowers, I knew it was myself plucking my own flowering.
When I went in a train, I knew it was myself travelling by my own invention.
When I heard the cannon of the war, I listened with my own ears to my own destruction.
When I saw the torn dead, I knew it was my own torn dead body.
It was all me, I had done it all in my own flesh.

III

I shall never forget the maniacal horror of it all in the end
when everything was me, I knew it all already, I anticipated it all in my soul
because I was the author and the result
I was the God and the creation at once ;
creator, I looked at my creation ;
created, I looked at myself, the creator :
it was a maniacal horror in the end.

I was a lover, I kissed the woman I loved,
and God of horror, I was kissing also myself.
I was a father and a begetter of children,
and oh, oh horror, I was begetting and conceiving in my own body.

IV

At last came death, sufficiency of death,
and that at last relieved me, I died.
I buried my beloved ; it was good, I buried myself and was gone.
War came, and every hand raised to murder ;
very good, very good, every hand raised to murder !
Very good, very good, I am a murderer !
It is good, I can murder and murder, and see them fall,
the mutilated, horror-struck youths, a multitude
one on another, and then in clusters together

smashed, all oozing with blood, and burned in heaps
going up in a fœtid smoke to get rid of them,
the murdered bodies of youths and men in heaps
and heaps and heaps and horrible reeking heaps
till it is almost enough, till I am reduced perhaps ;
thousands and thousands of gaping, hideous foul dead
that are youths and men and me
being burned with oil, and consumed in corrupt thick smoke, that rolls
and taints and blackens the sky, till at last it is dark, dark as night, or death, or hell
and I am dead, and trodden to nought in the smoke-sodden tomb ;
dead and trodden to nought in the sour black earth
of the tomb ; dead and trodden to nought, trodden to nought.

v

God, but it is good to have died and been trodden out,
trodden to nought in sour, dead earth,
quite to nought,
absolutely to nothing
nothing
nothing
nothing.

For when it is quite, quite nothing, then it is everything.
When I am trodden quite out, quite, quite out,
every vestige gone, then I am here
risen, and setting my foot on another world
risen, accomplishing a resurrection
risen, not born again, but risen, body the same as before,
new beyond knowledge of newness, alive beyond life,
proud beyond inkling or furthest conception of pride,
living where life was never yet dreamed of, nor hinted at,
here, in the other world, still terrestrial
myself, the same as before, yet unaccountably new.

VI

I, in the sour black tomb, trodden to absolute death
I put out my hand in the night, one night, and my hand
touched that which was verily not me,
verily it was not me.
Where I had been was a sudden blaze,
a sudden flaring blaze!
So I put my hand out further, a little further
and I felt that which was not I,
it verily was not I,
it was the unknown.

Ha, I was a blaze leaping up!
I was a tiger bursting into sunlight.
I was greedy, I was mad for the unknown.
I, new-risen, resurrected, starved from the tomb,
starved from a life of devouring always myself,
now here was I, new-awakened, with my hand stretching out
and touching the unknown, the real unknown, the unknown
unknown.

My God, but I can only say
I touch, I feel the unknown!
I am the first comer!
Cortes, Pisarro, Columbus, Cabot, they are nothing, nothing!
I am the first comer!
I am the discoverer!
I have found the other world!

The unknown, the unknown!
I am thrown upon the shore.
I am covering myself with the sand.
I am filling my mouth with the earth.
I am burrowing my body into the soil.
The unknown, the new world!

VII

It was the flank of my wife
I touched with my hand, I clutched with my hand,
rising, new-awakened from the tomb!
It was the flank of my wife
whom I married years ago
at whose side I have lain for over a thousand nights
and all that previous while, she was I, she was I;
I touched her, it was I who touched and I who was touched.

Yet rising from the tomb, from the black oblivion
stretching out my hand, my hand flung like a drowned man's hand on a rock,
I touched her flank and knew I was carried by the current in death
over to the new world, and was climbing out on the shore,
risen, not to the old world, the old, changeless I, the old life,
wakened not to the old knowledge
but to a new earth, a new I, a new knowledge, a new world of time.

Ah no, I cannot tell you what it is, the new world.
I cannot tell you the mad, astounded rapture of its discovery.
I shall be mad with delight before I have done,
and whosoever comes after will find me in the new world
a madman in rapture.

VIII

Green streams that flow from the innermost continent of the new world,
what are they?
Green and illumined and travelling for ever
dissolved with the mystery of the innermost heart of the continent,
mystery beyond knowledge or endurance, so sumptuous
out of the well-heads of the new world.—

The other, she too has strange green eyes !
White sands and fruits unknown and perfumes that never
can blow across the dark seas to our usual world !
And land that beats with a pulse !
And valleys that draw close in love !
And strange ways where I fall into oblivion of uttermost
living !—
Also she who is the other has strange-mounded breasts and
strange sheer slopes, and white levels.

Sightless and strong oblivion in utter life takes possession of
me !
The unknown, strong current of life supreme
drowns me and sweeps me away and holds me down
to the sources of mystery, in the depths,
extinguishes there my risen resurrected life
and kindles it further at the core of utter mystery.

Greatham.

ELYSIUM

I HAVE found a place of loneliness
Lonelier than Lyonesse,
Lovelier than Paradise ;

Full of sweet stillness
That no noise can transgress,
Never a lamp distress.

The full moon sank in state.
I saw her stand and wait
For her watchers to shut the gate.

Then I found myself in a wonderland
All of shadow and of bland
Silence hard to understand.

I waited therefore ; then I knew
The presence of the flowers that grew
Noiseless, their wonder noiseless blew.

And flashing kingfishers that flew
In sightless beauty, and the few
Shadows the passing wild-beast threw.

And Eve approaching over the ground
Unheard and subtle, never a sound
To let me know that I was found.

Invisible the hands of Eve
Upon me travelling to reeve
Me from the matrix, to relieve

Me from the rest! Ah, terribly
Between the body of life and me
Her hands slid in and set me free.

Ah, with a fearful, strange detection
She found the source of my subjection
To the All, and severed the connection.

Delivered helpless and amazed
From the womb of the All, I am waiting, dazed
For memory to be erased.

Then I shall know the Elysium
That lies outside the monstrous womb
Of time from out of which I come.

MANIFESTO

I

A WOMAN has given me strength and affluence.
Admitted !

All the rocking wheat of Canada, ripening now,
has not so much of strength as the body of one woman
sweet in ear, nor so much to give
though it feed nations.

Hunger is the very Satan.
The fear of hunger is Moloch, Belial, the horrible God.
It is a fearful thing to be dominated by the fear of hunger.

Not bread alone, not the belly nor the thirsty throat.
I have never yet been smitten through the belly, with the lack
of bread,
no, nor even milk and honey.

The fear of the want of these things seems to be quite left out
of me.
For so much, I thank the good generations of mankind.

II

And the sweet, constant, balanced heat
of the suave sensitive body, the hunger for this
has never seized me and terrified me.
Here again, man has been good in his legacy to us, in these two
primary instances.

III

Then the dumb, aching, bitter, helpless need,
the pining to be initiated,

to have access to the knowledge that the great dead
have opened up for us, to know, to satisfy
the great and dominant hunger of the mind ;
man's sweetest harvest of the centuries. sweet, printed
books,
bright, glancing, exquisite corn of many a stubborn
glebe in the upturned darkness ;
I thank mankind with passionate heart
that I just escaped the hunger for these,
that they were given when I needed them,
because I am the son of man.

I have eaten, and drunk, and warmed and clothed my body,
I have been taught the language of understanding,
I have chosen among the bright and marvellous books,
like any prince, such stores of the world's supply
were open to me, in the wisdom and goodness of man.
So far, so good.
Wise, good provision that makes the heart swell with love !

IV

But then came another hunger
very deep, and ravening ;
the very body's body crying out
with a hunger more frightening, more profound
than stomach or throat or even the mind ;
redder than death, more clamorous

The hunger for the woman. Alas,
it is so deep a Moloch, ruthless and strong,
'tis like the unutterable name of the dread Lord,
not to be spoken aloud.
Yet there it is, the hunger which comes upon us,
which we must learn to satisfy with pure, real satisfaction ;
or perish, there is no alternative.

I thought it was woman, indiscriminate woman,
mere female adjunct of what I was.
Ah, that was torment hard enough
and a thing to be afraid of,
a threatening, torturing, phallic Moloch.

A woman fed that hunger in me at last.
What many women cannot give, one woman can ;
so I have known it.

She stood before me like riches that were mine.
Even then, in the dark, I was tortured, ravening, unfree,
Ashamed, and shameful, and vicious.
A man is so terrified of strong hunger ;
and this terror is the root of all cruelty.
She loved me, and stood before me, looking to me.
How could I look, when I was mad ? I looked sideways,
furtively,
being mad with voracious desire.

v

This comes right at last.
When a man is rich, he loses at last the hunger fear.
I lost at last the fierceness that fears it will starve.
I could put my face at last between her breasts
and know that they were given for ever
that I should never starve,
never perish ;
I had eaten of the bread that satisfies
and my body's body was appeased,
there was peace and richness,
fulfilment.

Let them praise desire who will,
but only fulfilment will do,
real fulfilment, nothing short.

It is our ratification,
our heaven, as a matter of fact.
Immortality, the heaven, is only a projection of this strange
but actual fulfilment,
here in the flesh.

So, another hunger was supplied,
and for this I have to thank one woman,
not mankind, for mankind would have prevented me ;
but one woman,
and these are my red-letter thanksgivings.

VI

To be, or not to be, is still the question.
This ache for being is the ultimate hunger.
And for myself, I can say " almost, almost, oh, very nearly."
Yet something remains.
Something shall not always remain.
For the main already is fulfilment.

What remains in me, is to be known even as I know.
I know her now : or perhaps, I know my own limitation
against her.

Plunging as I have done, over, over the brink
I have dropped at last headlong into nought, plunging upon
sheer hard extinction ;
I have come, as it were, not to know,
died, as it were ; ceased from knowing ; surpassed myself.
What can I say more, except that I know what it is to surpass
myself ?

It is a kind of death which is not death.
It is going a little beyond the bounds.
How can one speak, where there is a dumbness on one's mouth ?
I suppose, ultimately she is all beyond me,
she is all not-me, ultimately.

It is that that one comes to.
A curious agony, and a relief, when I touch that which is not me in any sense,
it wounds me to death with my own not-being; definite, inviolable limitation,
and something beyond, quite beyond, if you understand what that means.
It is the major part of being, this having surpassed oneself,
this having touched the edge of the beyond, and perished, yet not perished.

VII

I want her though, to take the same from me.
She touches me as if I were herself, her own.
She has not realised yet, that fearful thing, that I am the other,
she thinks we are all of one piece.
It is painfully untrue.

I want her to touch me at last, ah, on the root and quick of my darkness
and perish on me, as I have perished on her.

Then, we shall be two and distinct, we shall have each our separate being.
And that will be pure existence, real liberty.
Till then, we are confused, a mixture, unresolved, unextricated one from the other.
It is in pure, unutterable resolvedness, distinction of being, that one is free,
not in mixing, merging, not in similarity.
When she has put her hand on my secret, darkest sources, the darkest outgoings,
when it has struck home to her, like a death, " this is *him* ! "
she has no part in it, no part whatever,
it is the terrible *other*,

when she knows the fearful *other flesh*, ah, darkness unfathomable and fearful, contiguous and concrete,
when she is slain against me, and lies in a heap like one outside the house,
when she passes away as I have passed away,
being pressed up against the *other*,
then I shall be glad, I shall not be confused with her,
I shall be cleared, distinct, single as if burnished in silver,
having no adherence, no adhesion anywhere,
one clear, burnished, isolated being, unique,
and she also, pure, isolated, complete,
two of us, unutterably distinguished, and in unutterable conjunction.

Then we shall be free, freer than angels, ah, perfect.

VIII

After that, there will only remain that all men detach themselves and become unique,
that we are all detached, moving in freedom more than the angels,
conditioned only by our own pure single being,
having no laws but the laws of our own being.

Every human being will then be like a flower, untrammelled.
Every movement will be direct.
Only to be will be such delight, we cover our faces when we think of it
lest our faces betray us to some untimely fiend.

Every man himself, and therefore, a surpassing singleness of mankind.
The blazing tiger will spring upon the deer, undimmed,
the hen will nestle over her chickens,
we shall love, we shall hate,
but it will be like music, sheer utterance,

issuing straight out of the unknown,
the lightning and the rainbow appearing in us unbidden,
unchecked,
like ambassadors.

We shall not look before and after.
We shall *be*, *now*.
We shall know in full.
We, the mystic NOW.

Zennor.

AUTUMN RAIN

The plane leaves
fall black and wet
on the lawn ;

the cloud sheaves
in heaven's fields set
droop and are drawn

in falling seeds of rain ;
the seed of heaven
on my face

falling—I hear again
like echoes even
that softly pace

heaven's muffled floor.
the winds that tread
out all the grain

of tears, the store
harvested
in the sheaves of pain

caught up aloft :
the sheaves of dead
men that are slain

now winnowed soft
on the floor of heaven ;
manna invisible

of all the pain
here to us given ;
finely divisible
falling as rain.

FROST FLOWERS

It is not long since, here among all these folk
in London, I should have held myself
of no account whatever,
but should have stood aside and made them way
thinking that they, perhaps,
had more right than I—for who was I ?

Now I see them just the same, and watch them.
But of what account do I hold them ?

Especially the young women. I look at them
as they dart and flash
before the shops, like wagtails on the edge of a pool.

If I pass them close, or any man,
like sharp, slim wagtails they flash a little aside
pretending to avoid us ; yet all the time
calculating.

They think that we adore them—alas, would it were true !
Probably they think all men adore them,
howsoever they pass by.

What is it, that, from their faces fresh as spring,
such fair, fresh, alert, first-flower faces,
like lavender crocuses, snowdrops, like Roman hyacinths,
scyllas and yellow-haired hellebore, jonquils, dim anemones,
even the sulphur auriculas,
flowers that come first from the darkness, and feel cold to the
touch,
flowers scentless or pungent, ammoniacal almost ;

what is it, that, from the faces of the fair young women
comes like a pungent scent, a vibration beneath
that startles me, alarms me, stirs up a repulsion ?

They are the issue of acrid winter, these first-flower young women ;
their scent is lacerating and repellent,
it smells of burning snow, of hot-ache,
of earth, winter-pressed, strangled in corruption ;
it is the scent of the fiery-cold dregs of corruption,
when destruction soaks through the mortified, decomposing earth,
and the last fires of dissolution burn in the bosom of the ground.

They are the flowers of ice-vivid mortification,
thaw-cold, ice-corrupt blossoms,
with a loveliness I loathe ;
for what kind of ice-rotten, hot-aching heart must they need to root in !

CRAVING FOR SPRING

I WISH it were spring in the world.

Let it be spring !
Come, bubbling, surging tide of sap !
Come, rush of creation !
Come, life ! surge through this mass of mortification !
Come, sweep away these exquisite, ghastly first-flowers,
which are rather last-flowers !
Come, thaw down their cool portentousness, dissolve them :
snowdrops, straight, death-veined exhalations of white and purple crocuses,
flowers of the penumbra, issue of corruption, nourished in mortification,
jets of exquisite finality ;
Come, spring, make havoc of them !

I trample on the snowdrops, it gives me pleasure to tread down the jonquils,
to destroy the chill Lent lilies ;
for I am sick of them, their faint-bloodedness,
slow-blooded, icy-fleshed, portentous.

I want the fine, kindling wine-sap of spring,
gold, and of inconceivably fine, quintessential brightness,
rare almost as beams, yet overwhelmingly potent,
strong like the greatest force of world-balancing.

This is the same that picks up the harvest of wheat
and rocks it, tons of grain, on the ripening wind ;
the same that dangles the globe-shaped pleiads of fruit
temptingly in mid-air, between a playful thumb and finger ;
oh, and suddenly, from out of nowhere, whirls the pear-bloom,

upon us, and apple- and almond- and apricot- and quince-blossom,
storms and cumulus clouds of all imaginable blossom
about our bewildered faces,
though we do not worship.

I wish it were spring
cunningly blowing on the fallen sparks, odds and ends of the old, scattered fire,
and kindling shapely little conflagrations
curious long-legged foals, and wide-eared calves, and naked sparrow-bubs.

I wish that spring
would start the thundering traffic of feet
new feet on the earth, beating with impatience.

I wish it were spring, thundering
delicate, tender spring.
I wish these brittle, frost-lovely flowers of passionate, mysterious corruption
were not yet to come still more from the still-flickering discontent.

Oh, in the spring, the bluebell bows him down for very exuberance,
exulting with secret warm excess,
bowed down with his inner magnificence !

Oh, yes, the gush of spring is strong enough
to toss the globe of earth like a ball on a water-jet
dancing sportfully ;
as you see a tiny celluloid ball tossing on a squirt of water
for men to shoot at, penny-a-time, in a booth at a fair.

The gush of spring is strong enough
to play with the globe of earth like a ball on a fountain ;

At the same time it opens the tiny hands of the hazel
with such infinite patience.
The power of the rising, golden, all-creative sap could take the earth
and heave it off among the stars, into the invisible ;
the same sets the throstle at sunset on a bough
singing against the blackbird ;
comes out in the hesitating tremor of the primrose,
and betrays its candour in the round white strawberry flower,
is dignified in the foxglove, like a Red Indian brave.

Ah come, come quickly, spring !
Come and lift us towards our culmination, we myriads ;
we who have never flowered, like patient cactuses.
Come and lift us to our end, to blossom, bring us to our summer,
we who are winter-weary in the winter of the world.
Come making the chaffinch nests hollow and cosy,
come and soften the willow buds till they are puffed and furred,
then blow them over with gold.
Come and cajole the gawky colt's-foot flowers.

Come quickly, and vindicate us
against too much death.
Come quickly, and stir the rotten globe of the world from within,
burst it with germination, with world anew.
Come now, to us, your adherents, who cannot flower from the ice.
All the world gleams with the lilies of Death the Unconquerable,
but come, give us our turn.
Enough of the virgins and lilies, of passionate, suffocating perfume of corruption,
no more narcissus perfume, lily harlots, the blades of sensation
piercing the flesh to blossom of death.
Have done, have done with this shuddering, delicious business

of thrilling ruin in the flesh, of pungent passion, of rare, death-edged ecstasy.
Give us our turn, give us a chance, let our hour strike,
O soon, soon !
Let the darkness turn violet with rich dawn.
Let the darkness be warmed, warmed through to a ruddy violet,
incipient purpling towards summer in the world of the heart of man.

Are the violets already here !
Show me ! I tremble so much to hear it, that even now
on the threshold of spring, I fear I shall die.
Show me the violets that are out.

Oh, if it be true, and the living darkness of the blood of man is purpling with violets,
if the violets are coming out from under the rack of men, winter-rotten and fallen,
we shall have spring.
Pray not to die on this Pisgah blossoming with violets.
Pray to live through.

If you catch a whiff of violets from the darkness of the shadow of man
it will be spring in the world,
it will be spring in the world of the living ;
wonderment organising itself, heralding itself with the violets,
stirring of new seasons.

Ah, do not let me die on the brink of such anticipation !
Worse, let me not deceive myself.

Zennor.

BIRDS, BEASTS AND FLOWERS

FRUITS

POMEGRANATE

You tell me I am wrong.
Who are you, who is anybody to tell me I am wrong ?
I am not wrong.

In Syracuse, rock left bare by the viciousness of Greek
women,
No doubt you have forgotten the pomegranate-trees in
flower,
Oh so red, and such a lot of them.

Whereas at Venice,
Abhorrent, green, slippery city
Whose Doges were old, and had ancient eyes,
In the dense foliage of the inner garden
Pomegranates like bright green stone,
And barbed, barbed with a crown.
Oh, crown of spiked green metal
Actually growing !

Now in Tuscany,
Pomegranates to warm your hands at ;
And crowns, kingly, generous, tilting crowns
Over the left eyebrow.

And, if you dare, the fissure !

Do you mean to tell me you will see no fissure ?
Do you prefer to look on the plain side ?

For all that, the setting suns are open.
The end cracks open with the beginning :
Rosy, tender, glittering within the fissure.

Do you mean to tell me there should be no fissure ?
No glittering, compact drops of dawn ?
Do you mean it is wrong, the gold-filmed skin, integument,
shown ruptured ?

For my part, I prefer my heart to be broken.
It is so lovely, dawn-kaleidoscopic within the crack.

San Gervasio in Tuscany.

PEACH

Would you like to throw a stone at me ?
Here, take all that's left of my peach.

Blood-red, deep ;
Heaven knows how it came to pass.
Somebody's pound of flesh rendered up.

Wrinkled with secrets
And hard with the intention to keep them.

Why, from silvery peach-bloom,
From that shallow-silvery wine-glass on a short stem
This rolling, dropping, heavy globule ?

I am thinking, of course, of the peach before I ate it.

Why so velvety, why so voluptuous heavy ?
Why hanging with such inordinate weight ?
Why so indented ?

Why the groove ?
Why the lovely, bivalve roundnesses ?
Why the ripple down the sphere ?
Why the suggestion of incision ?

Why was not my peach round and finished like a billiard ball ?
It would have been if man had made it.
Though I've eaten it now.

But it wasn't round and finished like a billiard ball.
And because I say so, you would like to throw something at me.

Here, you can have my peach stone.

San Gervasio.

MEDLARS AND SORB-APPLES

I LOVE you, rotten,
Delicious rottenness.

I love to suck you out from your skins
So brown and soft and coming suave,
So morbid, as the Italians say.

What a rare, powerful, reminiscent flavour
Comes out of your falling through the stages of decay :
Stream within stream.

Something of the same flavour as Syracusan muscat wine
Or vulgar Marsala.

Though even the word Marsala will smack of preciosity
Soon in the pussyfoot West.

What is it ?
What is it, in the grape turning raisin,
In the medlar, in the sorb-apple,
Wineskins of brown morbidity,
Autumnal excrementa ;
What is it that reminds us of white gods ?

Gods nude as blanched nut-kernels,
Strangely, half-sinisterly flesh-fragrant
As if with sweat,
And drenched with mystery.

Sorb-apples, medlars with dead crowns.

I say, wonderful are the hellish experiences,
Orphic, delicate
Dionysos of the Underworld.

A kiss, and a spasm of farewell, a moment's orgasm of rupture,
Then along the damp road alone, till the next turning.
And there, a new partner, a new parting, a new unfusing into twain,
A new gasp of further isolation,
A new intoxication of loneliness, among decaying, frost-cold leaves.

Going down the strange lanes of hell, more and more intensely alone,
The fibres of the heart parting one after the other
And yet the soul continuing, naked-footed, ever more vividly embodied
Like a flame blown whiter and whiter
In a deeper and deeper darkness
Ever more exquisite, distilled in separation.

So, in the strange retorts of medlars and sorb-apples
The distilled essence of hell.
The exquisite odour of leave-taking.
Jamque vale!
Orpheus, and the winding, leaf-clogged, silent lanes of hell.

Each soul departing with its own isolation,
Strangest of all strange companions,
And best.

Medlars, sorb-apples,
More than sweet
Flux of autumn
Sucked out of your empty bladders

And sipped down, perhaps, with a sip of Marsala
So that the rambling, sky-dropped grape can add its savour
to yours,
Orphic farewell, and farewell, and farewell
And the *ego sum* of Dionysos
The *sono io* of perfect drunkenness
Intoxication of final loneliness.

San Gervasio.

FIGS

The proper way to eat a fig, in society,
Is to split it in four, holding it by the stump,
And open it, so that it is a glittering, rosy, moist, honied, heavy-petalled four-petalled flower.

Then you throw away the skin
Which is just like a four-sepalled calyx,
After you have taken off the blossom with your lips.

But the vulgar way
Is just to put your mouth to the crack, and take out the flesh in one bite.

Every fruit has its secret.

The fig is a very secretive fruit.
As you see it standing growing, you feel at once it is symbolic :
And it seems male.
But when you come to know it better, you agree with the Romans, it is female.

The Italians vulgarly say, it stands for the female part ; the fig-fruit :
The fissure, the yoni,
The wonderful moist conductivity towards the centre.

Involved,
Inturned,
The flowering all inward and womb-fibrilled ;
And but one orifice.

The fig, the horse-shoe, the squash-blossom.
Symbols.

There was a flower that flowered inward, womb-ward ;
Now there is a fruit like a ripe womb.

It was always a secret.
That's how it should be, the female should always be secret.

There never was any standing aloft and unfolded on a bough
Like other flowers, in a revelation of petals ;
Silver-pink peach, venetian green glass of medlars and sorb-apples,
Shallow wine-cups on short, bulging stems
Openly pledging heaven :
Here's to the thorn in flower ! Here is to Utterance !
The brave, adventurous rosaceæ.

Folded upon itself, and secret unutterable,
And milky-sapped, sap that curdles milk and makes *ricotta*,
Sap that smells strange on your fingers, that even goats won't taste it ;
Folded upon itself, enclosed like any Mohammedan woman,
Its nakedness all within-walls, its flowering forever unseen,
One small way of access only, and this close-curtained from the light ;
Fig, fruit of the female mystery, covert and inward,
Mediterranean fruit, with your covert nakedness,
Where everything happens invisible, flowering and fertilisation, and fruiting
In the inwardness of your you, that eye will never see
Till it's finished, and you're over-ripe, and you burst to give up your ghost.

Till the drop of ripeness exudes,
And the year is over.

And then the fig has kept her secret long enough.
So it explodes, and you see through the fissure the scarlet.
And the fig is finished, the year is over.

That's how the fig dies, showing her crimson through the purple slit
Like a wound, the exposure of her secret, on the open day.
Like a prostitute, the bursten fig, making a show of her secret.

That's how women die too.

The year is fallen over-ripe,
The year of our women.
The year of our women is fallen over-ripe.
The secret is laid bare.
And rottenness soon sets in.
The year of our women is fallen over-ripe.

When Eve once knew *in her mind* that she was naked
She quickly sewed fig-leaves, and sewed the same for the man.
She'd been naked all her days before,
But till then, till that apple of knowledge, she hadn't had the fact on her mind.

She got the fact on her mind, and quickly sewed fig-leaves.
And women have been sewing ever since.
But now they stitch to adorn the bursten fig, not to cover it.
They have their nakedness more than ever on their mind,
And they won't let us forget it.

Now, the secret
Becomes an affirmation through moist, scarlet lips
That laugh at the Lord's indignation.

What then, good Lord! cry the women.
We have kept our secret long enough.
We are a ripe fig.
Let us burst into affirmation.

They forget, ripe figs won't keep.
Ripe figs won't keep.

Honey-white figs of the north, black figs with scarlet inside, of the south.
Ripe figs won't keep, won't keep in any clime.
What then, when women the world over have all bursten into self-assertion ?
And bursten figs won't keep ?

San Gervasio.

GRAPES

So many fruits come from roses,
From the rose of all roses,
From the unfolded rose,
Rose of all the world.

Admit that apples and strawberries and peaches and pears and blackberries
Are all Rosaceæ,
Issue of the explicit rose,
The open-countenanced, skyward-smiling rose.

What then of the vine ?
Oh, what of the tendrilled vine ?

Ours is the universe of the unfolded rose,
The explicit
The candid revelation.

But long ago, oh, long ago
Before the rose began to simper supreme,
Before the rose of all roses, rose of all the world, was even in bud,
Before the glaciers were gathered up in a bunch out of the unsettled seas and winds,
Or else before they had been let down again, in Noah's flood,
There was another world, a dusky, flowerless, tendrilled world
And creatures webbed and marshy,
And on the margin, men soft-footed and pristine,
Still, and sensitive, and active,
Audile, tactile sensitiveness as of a tendril which orientates and reaches out,
Reaching out and grasping by an instinct more delicate than the moon's as she feels for the tides.

Of which world, the vine was the invisible rose,
Before petals spread, before colour made its disturbance,
before eyes saw too much.

In a green, muddy, web-foot, unutterly songless world
The vine was rose of all roses.

There were no poppies or carnations,
Hardly a greenish lily, watery faint.
Green, dim, invisible flourishing of vines
Royally gesticulate.

Look now even now, how it keeps its power of invisibility !
Look how black, how blue-black, how globed in Egyptian
darkness
Dropping among his leaves, hangs the dark grape !
See him there, the swart, so palpably invisible :
Whom shall we ask about him ?

The negro might know a little.
When the vine was rose, Gods were dark-skinned.
Bacchus is a dream's dream.
Once God was all negroid, as now he is fair.
But it's so long ago, the ancient Bushman has forgotten more
utterly than we, who have never known.

For we are on the brink of re-remembrance.
Which, I suppose, is why America has gone dry.
Our pale day is sinking into twilight,
And if we sip the wine, we find dreams coming upon us
Out of the imminent night.
Nay, we find ourselves crossing the fern-scented frontiers
Of the world before the floods, where man was dark and evasive
And the tiny vine-flower rose of all roses, perfumed,
And all in naked communion communicating as now our
clothed vision can never communicate.
Vistas, down dark avenues,
As we sip the wine.

The grape is swart, the avenues dusky and tendrilled, subtly
prehensile,
But we, as we start awake, clutch at our vistas democratic,
boulevards, tram-cars, policemen.
Give us our own back,
Let us go to the soda-fountain, to get sober.

Soberness, sobriety.
It is like the agonised perverseness of a child heavy with sleep,
yet fighting, fighting to keep awake ;
Soberness, sobriety, with heavy eyes propped open.

Dusky are the avenues of wine,
And we must cross the frontiers, though we will not,
Of the lost, fern-scented world :
Take the fern-seed on our lips,
Close the eyes, and go
Down the tendrilled avenues of wine and the otherworld.

San Gervasio.

THE REVOLUTIONARY

Look at them standing there in authority,
The pale-faces,
As if it could have any effect any more.

Pale-face authority,
Caryatids,
Pillars of white bronze standing rigid, lest the skies fall.

What a job they've got to keep it up.
Their poor, idealist foreheads naked capitals
To the entablature of clouded heaven.

When the skies are going to fall, fall they will
In a great chute and rush of débâcle downwards.

Oh and I wish the high and super-gothic heavens would come down now,
The heavens above, that we yearn to and aspire to.

I do not yearn, nor aspire, for I am a blind Samson.
And what is daylight to me that I should look skyward ?
Only I grope among you, pale-faces, caryatids, as among a forest of pillars that hold up the dome of high ideal heaven
Which is my prison,
And all these human pillars of loftiness, going stiff, metallic-stunned with the weight of their responsibility
I stumble against them.
Stumbling-blocks, painful ones.

To keep on holding up this ideal civilisation
Must be excruciating: unless you stiffen into metal, when it is easier to stand stock rigid than to move.

This is why I tug at them, individually, with my arm round their waist,
The human pillars.
They are not stronger than I am, blind Samson.
The house sways.

I shall be so glad when it comes down.
I am so tired of the limitations of their Infinite.
I am so sick of the pretensions of the Spirit.
I am so weary of pale-face importance.

Am I not blind, at the round-turning mill ?
Then why should I fear their pale faces ?
Or love the effulgence of their holy light,
The sun of their righteousness ?

To me, all faces are dark,
All lips are dusky and valved.

Save your lips, O pale-faces,
Which are slips of metal,
Like slits in an automatic-machine, you columns of give-and-take.

To me, the earth rolls ponderously, superbly
Coming my way without forethought or afterthought.
To me, men's footfalls fall with a dull, soft rumble, ominous and lovely,
Coming my way.

But not your foot-falls, pale-faces,
They are a clicketing of bits of disjointed metal
Working in motion.

To me, men are palpable, invisible nearnesses in the dark
Sending out magnetic vibrations of warning, pitch-dark throbs of invitation.

But you, pale-faces,
You are painful, harsh-surfaced pillars that give off nothing
except rigidity,
And I jut against you if I try to move, for you are everywhere,
and I am blind,
Sightless among all your visuality,
You staring caryatids.

See if I don't bring you down, and all your high opinion
And all your ponderous roofed-in erection of right and wrong,
Your particular heavens,
With a smash.

See if your skies aren't falling !
And my head, at least, is thick enough to stand it, the smash.

See if I don't move under a dark and nude, vast heaven
When your world is in ruins, under your fallen skies.
Caryatids, pale-faces.
See if I am not Lord of the dark and moving hosts
Before I die.

Florence.

THE EVENING LAND

Oh, America,
The sun sets in you.
Are you the grave of our day ?

Shall I come to you, the open tomb of my race ?

I would come, if I felt my hour had struck.
I would rather you came to me.

For that matter
Mahomet never went to any mountain
Save it had first approached him and cajoled his soul.

You have cajoled the souls of millions of us,
America,
Why won't you cajole my soul ?
I wish you would.

I confess I am afraid of you.

The catastrophe of your exaggerate love,
You who never find yourself in love
But only lose yourself further, decomposing.

You who never recover from out of the orgasm of loving
Your pristine, isolate integrity, lost æons ago.
Your singleness within the universe.

You who in loving break down
And break further and further down
Your bounds of isolation,
But who never rise, resurrected, from this grave of mingling,
In a new proud singleness, America.

Your more-than-European idealism,
Like a be-aureoled bleached skeleton hovering
Its cage-ribs in the social heaven, beneficent.

And then your single resurrection
Into machine-uprisen perfect man.

Even the winged skeleton of your bleached ideal
Is not so frightening as that clean smooth
Automaton of your uprisen self,
Machine American.

Do you wonder that I am afraid to come
And answer the first machine-cut question from the lips of your
iron men ?
Put the first cents into metallic fingers of your officers
And sit beside the steel-straight arms of your fair women,
American ?

This may be a withering tree, this Europe,
But here, even a customs-official is still vulnerable.

I am so terrified, America,
Of the iron click of your human contact.
And after this
The winding-sheet of your self-less ideal love.
Boundless love
Like a poison gas.

Does no one realise that love should be intense, individual,
Not boundless.
This boundless love is like the bad smell
Of something gone wrong in the middle.
All this philanthropy and benevolence on other people's behalf
Just a bad smell.

Yet, America,
Your elvishness,
Your New England uncanniness,
Your western brutal faery quality.

My soul is half-cajoled, half-cajoled.

Something in you which carries me beyond,
Yankee, Yankee,
What we call human.
Carries me where I want to be carried . . .
Or don't I ?

What does it matter
What we call human, and what we don't call human ?
The rose would smell as sweet.
And to be limited by a mere word is to be less than a hopping flea, which hops over such an obstruction at first jump.

Your horrible, skeleton, aureoled ideal,
Your weird bright motor-productive mechanism,
Two spectres.

But moreover
A dark, unfathomed will, that is not un-Jewish ;
A set, stoic endurance, non-European ;
An ultimate desperateness, un-African ;
A deliberate generosity, non-Oriental.

The strange, unaccustomed geste of your demonish New World nature
Glimpsed now and then.

Nobody knows you.
You don't know yourself.
And I, who am half in love with you,
What am I in love with ?
My own imaginings ?

Say it is not so.

Say, through the branches
America, America
Of all your machines,
Say, in the deep sockets of your idealistic skull,
Dark, aboriginal eyes
Stoic, able to wait through ages
Glancing.

Say, in the sound of all your machines
And white words, white-wash American,
Deep pulsing of a strange heart
New throb, like a stirring under the false dawn that precedes the real.

Nascent American
Demonish, lurking among the undergrowth
Of many-stemmed machines and chimneys that smoke like pine-trees.

Dark, elvish,
Modern, unissued, uncanny America,
Your nascent demon people
Lurking among the deeps of your industrial thicket
Allure me till I am beside myself,
A nympholepht,

" These States ! " as Whitman said,
Whatever he meant.

Baden-Baden.

PEACE

PEACE is written on the doorstep
In lava.

Peace, black peace congealed.
My heart will know no peace
Till the hill bursts.

Brilliant, intolerable lava,
Brilliant as a powerful burning-glass,
Walking like a royal snake down the mountain towards
the sea.

Forests, cities, bridges
Gone again in the bright trail of lava.
Naxos thousands of feet below the olive-roots,
And now the olive leaves thousands of feet below the
lava fire.

Peace congealed in black lava on the doorstep.
Within, white-hot lava, never at peace
Till it burst forth blinding, withering the earth ;
To set again into rock,
Grey-black rock.

Call it Peace ?

Taormina.

TREES

CYPRESSES

Tuscan cypresses,
What is it ?

Folded in like a dark thought
For which the language is lost,
Tuscan cypresses,
Is there a great secret ?
Are our words no good ?

The undeliverable secret,
Dead with a dead race and a dead speech, and yet
Darkly monumental in you,
Etruscan cypresses.

Ah, how I admire your fidelity,
Dark cypresses !

Is it the secret of the long-nosed Etruscans ?
The long-nosed, sensitive-footed, subtly-smiling Etruscans,
Who made so little noise outside the cypress groves ?

Among the sinuous, flame-tall cypresses
That swayed their length of darkness all around
Etruscan-dusky, wavering men of old Etruria :
Naked except for fanciful long shoes,
Going with insidious, half-smiling quietness
And some of Africa's imperturbable sang-froid
About a forgotten business.

What business, then ?
Nay, tongues are dead, and words are hollow as hollow seed-pods,
Having shed their sound and finished all their echoing
Etruscan syllables,
That had the telling.

Yet more I see you darkly concentrate,
Tuscan cypresses,
On one old thought :
On one old slim imperishable thought, while you remain
Etruscan cypresses ;
Dusky, slim marrow-thought of slender, flickering men
of Etruria,
Whom Rome called vicious.

Vicious, dark cypresses :
Vicious, you supple, brooding, softly-swaying pillars of
dark flame.
Monumental to a dead, dead race
Embowered in you !

Were they then vicious, the slender, tender-footed
Long-nosed men of Etruria ?
Or was their way only evasive and different, dark, like
cypress-trees in a wind ?

They are dead, with all their vices,
And all that is left
Is the shadowy monomania of some cypresses
And tombs.

The smile, the subtle Etruscan smile still lurking
Within the tombs,
Etruscan cypresses.
He laughs longest who laughs last ;
Nay, Leonardo only bungled the pure Etruscan smile.

What would I not give
To bring back the rare and orchid-like
Evil-yclept Etruscan ?

For as to the evil
We have only Roman word for it,
Which I, being a little weary of Roman virtue,
Don't hang much weight on.

For oh, I know, in the dust where we have buried
The silenced races and all their abominations,
We have buried so much of the delicate magic of life.

There in the deeps
That churn the frankincense and ooze the myrrh,
Cypress shadowy,
Such an aroma of lost human life!

They say the fit survive,
But I invoke the spirits of the lost.
Those that have not survived, the darkly lost,
To bring their meaning back into life again,
Which they have taken away
And wrapt inviolable in soft cypress-trees,
Etruscan cypresses.

Evil, what is evil?
There is only one evil, to deny life
As Rome denied Etruria
And mechanical America Montezuma still.

Fiesole.

BARE FIG-TREES

Fig-trees, weird fig-trees
Made of thick smooth silver,
Made of sweet, untarnished silver in the sea-southern air—
I say untarnished, but I mean opaque—
Thick, smooth-fleshed silver, dull only as human limbs are dull
With the life-lustre,
Nude with the dim light of full, healthy life
That is always half-dark,
And suave like passion-flower petals,
Like passion-flowers,
With the half-secret gleam of a passion-flower hanging from the rock,
Great, complicated, nude fig-tree, stemless flower-mesh,
Flowerily naked in flesh, and giving off hues of life.

Rather like an octopus, but strange and sweet-myriad-limbed octopus;
Like a nude, like a rock-living, sweet-fleshed sea-anemone,
Flourishing from the rock in a mysterious arrogance.

Let me sit down beneath the many-branching candelabrum
That lives upon this rock
And laugh at Time, and laugh at dull Eternity,
And make a joke of stale Infinity,
Within the flesh-scent of this wicked tree,
That has kept so many secrets up its sleeve,
And has been laughing through so many ages
At man and his uncomfortablenesses,
And his attempt to assure himself that what is so is not so,
Up its sleeve.

Let me sit down beneath this many-branching candelabrum,
The Jewish seven-branched, tallow-stinking candlestick kicked over the cliff
And all its tallow righteousness got rid of,
And let me notice it behave itself.

And watch it putting forth each time to heaven,
Each time straight to heaven,
With marvellous naked assurance each single twig,
Each one setting off straight to the sky
As if it were the leader, the main-stem, the forerunner,
Intent to hold the candle of the sun upon its socket-tip,
It alone.

Every young twig
No sooner issued sideways from the thigh of his predecessor
Than off he starts without a qualm
To hold the one and only lighted candle of the sun in his socket-tip.
He casually gives birth to another young bud from his thigh,
Which at once sets off to be the one and only,
And hold the lighted candle of the sun.

Oh many-branching candelabrum, oh strange up-starting fig-tree,
Oh weird Demos, where every twig is the arch twig,
Each imperiously over-equal to each, equality over-reaching itself
Like the snakes on Medusa's head,
Oh naked fig-tree !

Still, no doubt every one of you can be the sun-socket as well as every other of you.
Demos, Demos, Demos !
Demon, too,
Wicked fig-tree, equality puzzle, with your self-conscious secret fruits.

Taormina.

BARE ALMOND-TREES

Wet almond-trees, in the rain,
Like iron sticking grimly out of earth ;
Black almond trunks, in the rain,
Like iron implements twisted, hideous, out of the earth,
Out of the deep, soft fledge of Sicilian winter-green,
Earth-grass uneatable,
Almond trunks curving blackly, iron-dark, climbing the slopes.

Almond-tree, beneath the terrace rail,
Black, rusted, iron trunk,
You have welded your thin stems finer,
Like steel, like sensitive steel in the air,
Grey, lavender, sensitive steel, curving thinly and brittly up in a parabola.

What are you doing in the December rain ?
Have you a strange electric sensitiveness in your steel tips ?
Do you feel the air for electric influences
Like some strange magnetic apparatus ?
Do you take in messages, in some strange code,
From heaven's wolfish, wandering electricity, that prowls so constantly round Etna ?
Do you take the whisper of sulphur from the air ?
Do you hear the chemical accents of the sun ?
Do you telephone the roar of the waters over the earth ?
And from all this, do you make calculations ?

Sicily, December's Sicily in a mass of rain
With iron branching blackly, rusted like old, twisted implements
And brandishing and stooping over earth's wintry fledge, climbing the slopes
Of uneatable soft green !

Taormina.

TROPIC

Sun, dark sun,
Sun of black void heat,
Sun of the torrid mid-day's horrific darkness :

Behold my hair twisting and going black.
Behold my eyes turn tawny yellow
Negroid ;
See the milk of northern spume
Coagulating and going black in my veins
Aromatic as frankincense.

Columns dark and soft,
Sunblack men,
Soft shafts, sunbreathing mouths,
Eyes of yellow, golden sand
As frictional, as perilous, explosive as brimstone.

Rock, waves of dark heat ;
Waves of dark heat, rock, sway upwards,
Waver perpendicular.

What is the horizontal rolling of water
Compared to the flood of black heat that rolls upwards
past my eyes ?

Taormina.

SOUTHERN NIGHT

Come up, thou red thing.
Come up, and be called a moon.

The mosquitoes are biting to-night
Like memories.

Memories, northern memories,
Bitter-stinging white world that bore us
Subsiding into this night.

Call it moonrise
This red anathema ?

Rise, thou red thing,
Unfold slowly upwards, blood-dark ;
Burst the night's membrane of tranquil stars
Finally.

Maculate
The red Macula.

Taormina.

FLOWERS

ALMOND BLOSSOM

Even iron can put forth,
Even iron.

This is the iron age,
But let us take heart
Seeing iron break and bud,
Seeing rusty iron puff with clouds of blossom.

The almond-tree,
December's bare iron hooks sticking out of earth.

The almond-tree,
That knows the deadliest poison, like a snake
In supreme bitterness.

Upon the iron, and upon the steel,
Odd flakes as if of snow, odd bits of snow,
Odd crumbs of melting snow.

But you mistake, it is not from the sky ;
From out the iron, and from out the steel,
Flying not down from heaven, but storming up,
Strange storming up from the dense under-earth
Along the iron, to the living steel
In rose-hot tips, and flakes of rose-pale snow
Setting supreme annunciation to the world.

Nay, what a heart of delicate super-faith,
Iron-breaking,
The rusty swords of almond-trees.

Trees suffer, like races, down the long ages.
They wander and are exiled, they live in exile through long ages
Like drawn blades never sheathed, hacked and gone black,
The alien trees in alien lands : and yet
The heart of blossom,
The unquenchable heart of blossom !

Look at the many-cicatrised frail vine, none more scarred and frail,
Yet see him fling himself abroad in fresh abandon
From the small wound-stump.

Even the wilful, obstinate, gummy fig-tree
Can be kept down, but he'll burst like a polyp into prolixity.

And the almond-tree, in exile, in the iron age !

This is the ancient southern earth whence the vases were baked, amphoras, craters, cantharus, œnochœ, and open-hearted cylix,
Bristling now with the iron of almond-trees

Iron, but unforgotten,
Iron, dawn-hearted,
Ever-beating dawn-heart, enveloped in iron against the exile, against the ages.

See it come forth in blossom
From the snow-remembering heart
In long-nighted January,
In the long dark nights of the evening star, and Sirius, and the Etna snow-wind through the long night.

Sweating his drops of blood through the long-nighted Gethsemane
Into blossom, into pride, into honey-triumph, into most exquisite splendour.
Oh, give me the tree of life in blossom
And the Cross sprouting its superb and fearless flowers !

Something must be reassuring to the almond, in the evening
star, and the snow-wind, and the long, long nights,
Some memory of far, sun-gentler lands,
So that the faith in his heart smiles again
And his blood ripples with that untellable delight of once-more-
vindicated faith,
And the Gethsemane blood at the iron pores unfolds, unfolds,
Pearls itself into tenderness of bud
And in a great and sacred forthcoming steps forth, steps out
in one stride
A naked tree of blossom, like a bridegroom bathing in dew,
divested of cover,
Frail-naked, utterly uncovered
To the green night-baying of the dog-star, Etna's snow-edged
wind
And January's loud-seeming sun.

Think of it, from the iron fastness
Suddenly to dare to come out naked, in perfection of blossom,
beyond the sword-rust.
Think, to stand there in full-unfolded nudity, smiling,
With all the snow-wind, and the sun-glare, and the dog-star
baying epithalamion.

Oh, honey-bodied beautiful one
Come forth from iron,
Red your heart is.
Fragile-tender, fragile-tender life-body,
More fearless than iron all the time,
And so much prouder, so disdainful of reluctances.

In the distance like hoar-frost, like silvery ghosts communing
on a green hill,
Hoar-frost-like and mysterious.

In the garden raying out
With a body like spray, dawn-tender, and looking about
With such insuperable, subtly-smiling assurance,
Sword-blade-born.

Unpromised,
No bounds being set.
Flaked out and come unpromised,
The tree being life-divine,
Fearing nothing, life-blissful at the core
Within iron and earth.

Knots of pink, fish-silvery
In heaven, in blue, blue heaven,
Soundless, bliss-full, wide-rayed, honey-bodied,
Red at the core,
Red at the core,
Knotted in heaven upon the fine light.

Open,
Open,
Five times wide open,
Six times wide open,
And given, and perfect ;
And red at the core with the last sore-heartedness,
Sore-hearted-looking.

Fontana Vecchia.

PURPLE ANEMONES

Who gave us flowers?
Heaven? The white God?

Nonsense!
Up out of hell,
From Hades;
Infernal Dis!

Jesus the god of flowers——?
Not he.
Or sun-bright Apollo, him so musical?
Him neither.

Who then?
Say who.
Say it—and it is Pluto,
Dis,
The dark one.
Proserpine's master.

Who contradicts——?

When she broke forth from below,
Flowers came, hell-hounds on her heels.
Dis, the dark, the jealous god, the husband,
Flower-sumptuous-blooded.

Go then, he said.
And in Sicily, on the meadows of Enna,
She thought she had left him;
But opened around her purple anemones,

Caverns,
Little hells of colour, caves of darkness,
Hell, risen in pursuit of her ; royal, sumptuous
Pit-falls.

All at her feet
Hell opening ;
At her white ankles
Hell rearing its husband-splendid, serpent heads,
Hell-purple, to get at her—
Why did he let her go ?
So he could track her down again, white victim.

Ah mastery !
Hell's husband-blossoms
Out on earth again.

Look out, Persephone !
You, Madame Ceres, mind yourself, the enemy is upon you.
About your feet spontaneous aconite,
Hell-glamorous, and purple husband-tyranny
Enveloping your late-enfranchised plains.

You thought your daughter had escaped ?
No more stockings to darn for the flower-roots, down in hell ?
But ah, my dear !
Aha, the stripe-cheeked whelps, whippet-slim crocuses,
At 'em, boys, at 'em !
Ho, golden-spaniel, sweet alert narcissus,
Smell 'em, smell 'em out !

Those two enfranchised women.

Somebody is coming !
Oho there !

Dark blue anemones !
Hell is up !
Hell on earth, and Dis within the depths !

Run, Persephone, he is after you already.

Why did he let her go ?
To track her down ;
All the sport of summer and spring, and flowers snapping
at her ankles and catching her by the hair !
Poor Persephone and her rights for women.

Husband-snared hell-queen,
It is spring.

It is spring,
And pomp of husband-strategy on earth.

Ceres, kiss your girl, you think you've got her back.
The bit of husband-tilth she is,
Persephone !

Poor mothers-in-law !
They are always sold.

It is spring.

Taormina.

SICILIAN CYCLAMENS

When he pushed his bush of black hair off his brow :
When she lifted her mop from her eyes, and screwed it in a knob behind
—O act of fearful temerity !
When they felt their foreheads bare, naked to heaven, their eyes revealed :
When they felt the light of heaven brandished like a knife at their defenceless eyes,
And the sea like a blade at their face,
Mediterranean savages :
When they came out, face-revealed, under heaven, from the shaggy undergrowth of their own hair
For the first time,
They saw tiny rose cyclamens between their toes, growing
Where the slow toads sat brooding on the past.

Slow toads, and cyclamen leaves
Stickily glistening with eternal shadow
Keeping to earth.
Cyclamen leaves
Toad-filmy, earth-iridescent
Beautiful
Frost-filigreed
Spumed with mud
Snail-nacreous
Low down.

The shaking aspect of the sea
And man's defenceless bare face
And cyclamens putting their ears back.

Long, pensive, slim-muzzled greyhound buds
Dreamy, not yet present,
Drawn out of earth
At his toes.

Dawn-rose
Sub-delighted, stone-engendered
Cyclamens, young cyclamens
Arching
Waking, pricking their ears
Like delicate very-young greyhound bitches
Half-yawning at the open, inexperienced
Vista of day,
Folding back their soundless petalled ears.

Greyhound bitches
Bending their rosy muzzles pensive down,
And breathing soft, unwilling to wake to the new day
Yet sub-delighted.

Ah Mediterranean morning, when our world began!
Far-off Mediterranean mornings,
Pelasgic faces uncovered,
And unbudding cyclamens.

The hare suddenly goes uphill
Laying back her long ears with unwinking bliss.

And up the pallid, sea-blenched Mediterranean stone-slopes
Rose cyclamen, ecstatic fore-runner!
Cyclamens, ruddy-muzzled cyclamens
In little bunches like bunches of wild hares
Muzzles together, ears-aprick,
Whispering witchcraft
Like women at a well, the dawn-fountain.

Greece, and the world's morning
Where all the Parthenon marbles still fostered the roots
of the cyclamen.
Violets
Pagan, rosy-muzzled violets
Autumnal
Dawn-pink,
Dawn-pale
Among squat toad-leaves sprinkling the unborn
Erechtheion marbles.

Taormina.

HIBISCUS AND SALVIA FLOWERS

Hark! Hark!
The dogs do bark!
It's the socialists come to town,
None in rags and none in tags,
Swaggering up and down.

Sunday morning,
And from the Sicilian townlets skirting Etna
The socialists have gathered upon us, to look at us.

How shall we know them when we see them?
How shall we know them now they've come?

Not by their rags and not by their tags,
Nor by any distinctive gown;
The same unremarkable Sunday suit
And hats cocked up and down.

Yet there they are, youths, loutishly
Strolling in gangs and staring along the Corso
With the gang-stare
And a half-threatening envy
At every *forestiere*,
Every lordly tuppenny foreigner from the hotels, fattening
on the exchange.

Hark! Hark!
The dogs do bark!
It's the socialists in the town.

Sans rags, sans tags,
Sans beards, sans bags,
Sans any distinction at all except loutish commonness.

How do we know then, that they are they ?
Bolshevists.
Leninists.
Communists.
Socialists.
-Ists ! -Ists !

Alas, salvia and hibiscus flowers.
Salvia and hibiscus flowers.

Listen again.
Salvia and hibiscus flowers.
Is it not so ?
Salvia and hibiscus flowers.

Hark ! Hark !
The dogs do bark !
Salvia and hibiscus flowers.

Who smeared their doors with blood ?
Who on their breasts
Put salvias and hibiscus ?

Rosy, rosy scarlet,
And flame-rage, golden-throated
Bloom along the Corso on the living, perambulating bush.

Who said they might assume these blossoms ?
What god did they consult ?

Rose-red, princess hibiscus, rolling her pointed Chinese petals !
Azalea and camellia, single peony
And pomegranate bloom and scarlet mallow-flower
And all the eastern, exquisite royal plants
That noble blood has brought us down the ages !
Gently nurtured, frail and splendid
Hibiscus flower—
Alas, the Sunday coats of Sicilian bolshevists !

Pure blood, and noble blood, in the fine and rose-red veins ;
Small, interspersed with jewels of white gold
Frail-filigreed among the rest ;
Rose of the oldest races of princesses, Polynesian
Hibiscus.

Eve, in her happy moments,
Put hibiscus in her hair,
Before she humbled herself, and knocked her knees with repentance.

Sicilian bolshevists,
With hibiscus flowers in the buttonholes of your Sunday suits,
Come now, speaking of rights, what right have you to this flower ?

The exquisite and ageless aristocracy
Of a peerless soul,
Blessed are the pure in heart and the fathomless in bright pride ;
The loveliness that knows *noblesse oblige* ;
The native royalty of red hibiscus flowers ;
The exquisite assertion of new delicate life
Risen from the roots :
Is this how you'll have it, red-decked socialists,
Hibiscus-breasted ?

If it be so, I fly to join you,
And if it be not so, brutes to pull down hibiscus flowers !

Or salvia !
Or dragon-mouthed salvia with gold throat of wrath !
Flame-flushed, enraged, splendid salvia,
Cock-crested, crowing your orange scarlet like a tocsin
Along the Corso all this Sunday morning.

Is your wrath red as salvias,
You socialists ?
You with your grudging, envious, furtive rage,
In Sunday suits and yellow boots along the Corso.
You look well with your salvia flowers, I must say.
Warrior-like, dawn-cock's-comb flaring flower
Shouting forth flame to set the world on fire,
The dust-heap of man's filthy world on fire,
And burn it down, the glutted, stuffy world,
And feed the young new fields of life with ash,
With ash I say,
Bolshevists,
Your ashes even, my friends,
Among much other ash.

If there were salvia-savage bolshevists
To burn the world back to manure-good ash,
Wouldn't I stick the salvia in my coat !
But these themselves must burn, these louts !

The dragon-faced,
The anger-reddened, golden-throated salvia
With its long antennæ of rage put out
Upon the frightened air.
Ugh, how I love its fangs of perfect rage
That gnash the air ;
The molten gold of its intolerable rage
Hot in the throat.

I long to be a bolshevist
And set the stinking rubbish-heap of this foul world
Afire at a myriad scarlet points,
A bolshevist, a salvia-face
To lick the world with flame that licks it clean.

I long to see its chock-full crowdedness
And glutted squirming populousness on fire
Like a field of filthy weeds
Burnt back to ash,
And then to see the new, real souls sprout up.

Not this vast rotting cabbage patch we call the world ;
But from the ash-scarred fallow
New wild souls.

Nettles, and a rose sprout,
Hibiscus, and mere grass,
Salvia still in a rage
And almond honey-still,
And fig-wort stinking for the carrion wasp ;
All the lot of them, and let them fight it out.

But not a trace of foul equality,
Nor sound of still more foul human perfection.
You need not clear the world like a cabbage patch for me ;
Leave me my nettles,
Let me fight the wicked, obstreperous weeds myself, and put them in their place,
Severely in their place.
I don't at all want to annihilate them,
I like a row with them,
But I won't be put on a cabbage-idealistic level of equality with them.

What rot, to see the cabbage and hibiscus-tree
As equals !
What rot, to say the louts along the Corso
In Sunday suits and yellow shoes
Are my equals !
I am their superior, saluting the hibiscus flower, not them.
The same I say to the profiteers from the hotels, the money-fat-ones,

Profiteers here being called dog-fish, stinking dog-fish,
sharks.
The same I say to the pale and elegant persons,
Pale-face authorities loitering tepidly :
That I salute the red hibiscus flowers
And send mankind to its inferior blazes.
Mankind's inferior blazes,
And these along with it, all the inferior lot—
These bolshevists,
These dog-fish,
These precious and ideal ones,
All rubbish ready for fire.

And I salute hibiscus and the salvia flower
Upon the breasts of loutish bolshevists,
Damned loutish bolshevists,
Who perhaps will do the business after all,
In the long run, in spite of themselves.

Meanwhile, alas
For me no fellow-men,
No salvia-frenzied comrades, antennæ
Of yellow-red, outreaching, living wrath
Upon the smouldering air,
And throat of brimstone-molten angry gold.
Red, angry men are a race extinct, alas !

Never
To be a bolshevist
With a hibiscus flower behind my ear
In sign of life, of lovely, dangerous life
And passionate disquality of men ;
In sign of dauntless, silent violets,
And impudent nettles grabbing the under-earth,
And cabbages born to be cut and eat,

And salvia fierce to crow and shout for fight,
And rosy-red hibiscus wincingly
Unfolding all her coiled and lovely self
In a doubtful world.

Never, bolshevistically
To be able to stand for all these !
Alas, alas, I have got to leave it all
To the youths in Sunday suits and yellow shoes
Who have pulled down the salvia flowers
And rosy delicate hibiscus flowers
And everything else to their disgusting level,
Never, of course, to put anything up again.

But yet
If they pull all the world down,
The process will amount to the same in the end.
Instead of flame and flame-clean ash,
Slow watery rotting back to level muck
And final humus,
Whence the re-start.

And still I cannot bear it
That they take hibiscus and the salvia flower.

Taormina.

THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

ST MATTHEW

They are not all beasts.
One is a man, for example, and one is a bird.

I, Matthew, am a man.

" And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me "—

That is Jesus.
But then Jesus was not quite a man.
He was the Son of Man
Filius Meus, O remorseless logic
Out of His own mouth.

I, Matthew, being a man
Cannot be lifted up, the Paraclete
To draw all men unto me,
Seeing I am on a par with all men.

I, on the other hand,
Am drawn to the Uplifted, as all men are drawn,
To the Son of Man
Filius Meus.

Wilt thou lift me up, Son of Man?
How my heart beats!
I am man.

I am man, and therefore my heart beats, and throws the
dark blood from side to side
All the time I am lifted up.
Yes, even during my uplifting.

And if it ceased ?
If it ceased, I should be no longer man
As I am, if my heart in uplifting ceased to beat, to toss the dark blood from side to side, causing my myriad secret streams.

After the cessation
I might be a soul in bliss, an angel, approximating to the Uplifted ;
But that is another matter ;
I am Matthew, the man,
And I am not that other angelic matter.

So I will be lifted up, Saviour,
But put me down again in time, Master,
Before my heart stops beating, and I become what I am not.
Put me down again on the earth, Jesus, on the brown soil
Where flowers sprout in the acrid humus, and fade into humus again.
Where beasts drop their unlicked young, and pasture, and drop their droppings among the turf.
Where the adder darts horizontal.
Down on the damp, unceasing ground, where my feet belong
And even my heart, Lord, forever, after all uplifting :
The crumbling, damp, fresh land, life horizontal and ceaseless.

Matthew I am, the man.
And I take the wings of the morning, to Thee, Crucified, Glorified.
But while flowers club their petals at evening
And rabbits make pills among the short grass
And long snakes quickly glide into the dark hole in the wall, hearing man approach,
I must be put down, Lord, in the afternoon,
And at evening I must leave off my wings of the spirit
As I leave off my braces,

And I must resume my nakedness like a fish, sinking down
the dark reversion of night
Like a fish seeking the bottom, Jesus,
ΙΧΘΥΣ
Face downwards
Veering slowly
Down between the steep slopes of darkness, fucus-dark, sea-
weed-fringed valleys of the waters under the sea,
Over the edge of the soundless cataract
Into the fathomless, bottomless pit
Where my soul falls in the last throes of bottomless convulsion,
and is fallen
Utterly beyond Thee, Dove of the Spirit ;
Beyond everything, except itself.

Nay, Son of Man, I have been lifted up.
To Thee I rose like a rocket ending in mid-heaven.
But even thou, Son of Man, canst not quaff out the dregs of
terrestrial manhood !
They fall back from Thee.

They fall back, and like a dripping of quicksilver taking the
downward track,
Break into drops, burn into drops of blood, and dropping,
dropping take wing
Membraned, blood-veined wings.
On fans of unsuspected tissue, like bats
They thread and thrill and flicker ever downward
To the dark zenith of Thine antipodes
Jesus Uplifted.

Bat-winged heart of man,
Reversed flame
Shuddering a strange way down the bottomless pit
To the great depths of its reversèd zenith.

Afterwards, afterwards
Morning comes, and I shake the dews of night from the wings of my spirit
And mount like a lark, Beloved.

But remember, Saviour,
That my heart which like a lark at heaven's gate singing, hovers morning-bright to Thee,
Throws still the dark blood back and forth
In the avenues where the bat hangs sleeping, upside-down
And to me undeniable, Jesus.

Listen, Paraclete.
I can no more deny the bat-wings of my fathom-flickering spirit of darkness
Than the wings of the Morning and Thee, Thou Glorified.

I am Matthew, the Man :
It is understood.
And Thou art Jesus, Son of Man
Drawing all men unto Thee, but bound to release them when the hour strikes.

I have been, and I have returned.
I have mounted up on the wings of the morning, and I have dredged down to the zenith's reversal.
Which is my way, being man.
Gods may stay in mid-heaven, the Son of Man has climbed to the Whitsun zenith,
But I, Matthew, being a man
Am a traveller back and forth.

So be it.

ST MARK

THERE was a lion in Judah
Which whelped, and was Mark.

But winged.
A lion with wings.
At least at Venice.
Even as late as Daniele Manin.

Why should he have wings ?
Is he to be a bird also ?
Or a spirit ?
Or a winged thought ?
Or a soaring consciousness ?

Evidently he is all that,
The lion of the spirit.

Ah, Lamb of God,
Would a wingless lion lie down before Thee, as this winged lion lies ?

The lion of the spirit.

Once he lay in the mouth of a cave
And sunned his whiskers,
And lashed his tail slowly, slowly
Thinking of voluptuousness
Even of blood.

But later, in the sun of the afternoon,
Having tasted all there was to taste, and having slept his fill
He fell to frowning, as he lay with his head on his paws
And the sun coming in through the narrowest fibril of a slit in his eyes.

So, nine-tenths asleep, motionless, bored, and statically angry,
He saw in a shaft of light a lamb on a pinnacle, balancing a flag on its paw,
And he was thoroughly startled.

Going out to investigate
He found the lamb beyond him, on the inaccessible pinnacle of light.
So he put his paw to his nose, and pondered.

" Guard my sheep," came the silvery voice from the pinnacle,
" And I will give thee the wings of the morning."
So the lion of the senses thought it was worth it.

Hence he became a curly sheep-dog with dangerous propensities,
As Carpaccio will tell you :
Ramping round, guarding the flock of mankind,
Sharpening his teeth on the wolves,
Ramping up through the air like a kestrel
And lashing his tail above the world
And enjoying the sensation of heaven and righteousness and voluptuous wrath.

There is a new sweetness in his voluptuously licking his paw
Now that it is a weapon of heaven.
There is a new ecstasy in his roar of desirous love
Now that it sounds self-conscious through the unlimited sky.
He is well aware of himself
And he cherishes voluptuous delights, and thinks about them
And ceases to be a blood-thirsty king of beasts
And becomes the faithful sheep-dog of the Shepherd, thinking of his voluptuous pleasures of chasing the sheep to the fold
And increasing the flock, and perhaps giving a real nip here and there, a real pinch, but always well meant.

And somewhere there is a lioness,
The she-mate.
Whelps play between the paws of the lion,
The she-mate purrs,
Their castle is impregnable, their cave,
The sun comes in their lair, they are well-off,
A well-to-do family.

Then the proud lion stalks abroad alone,
And roars to announce himself to the wolves
And also to encourage the red-cross Lamb
And also to ensure a goodly increase in the world.

Look at him, with his paw on the world
At Venice and elsewhere.
Going blind at last.

ST LUKE

A WALL, a bastion,
A living forehead with its slow whorl of hair
And a bull's large, sombre, glancing eye
And glistening, adhesive muzzle
With cavernous nostrils where the winds run hot
Snorting defiance
Or greedily snuffling behind the cows.

Horns,
The golden horns of power,
Power to kill, power to create
Such as Moses had, and God,
Head-power.

Shall great wings flame from his shoulder sockets
Assyrian-wise ?
It would be no wonder.

Knowing the thunder of his heart,
The massive thunder of his dew-lapped chest
Deep and reverberating,
It would be no wonder if great wings, like flame, fanned
out from the furnace-cracks of his shoulder-sockets.

Thud ! Thud ! Thud !
And the roar of black bull's blood in the mighty passages
of his chest.
Ah, the dewlap swings pendulous with excess.
The great, roaring weight above
Like a furnace dripping a molten drip

The urge, the massive, burning ache
Of the bull's breast.
The open furnace-doors of his nostrils.

For what does he ache, and groan ?

Is his breast a wall ?

Nay, once it was also a fortress wall, and the weight of a vast battery.
But now it is a burning hearthstone only,
Massive old altar of his own burnt offering.

It was always an altar of burnt offering
His own black blood poured out like a sheet of flame over his fecundating herd
As he gave himself forth.

But also it was a fiery fortress frowning shaggily on the world
And announcing battle ready.

Since the Lamb bewitched him with that red-struck flag
His fortress is dismantled
His fires of wrath are banked down
His horns turn away from the enemy.

He serves the Son of Man.

And hear him bellow, after many years, the bull that serves the Son of Man.
Moaning, booing, roaring hollow
Constrained to pour forth all his fire down the narrow sluice of procreation
Through such narrow loins, too narrow

Is he not over-charged by the dammed-up pressure of his own massive black blood
Luke, the Bull, the father of substance, the Providence Bull, after two thousand years ?
Is he not over-full of offering, a vast, vast offer of himself
Which must be poured through so small a vent ?

Too small a vent.

Let him remember his horns, then.
Seal up his forehead once more to a bastion,
Let it know nothing.
Let him charge like a mighty catapult on the red-cross flag, let him roar out challenge on the world
And throwing himself upon it, throw off the madness of his blood.
Let it be war.

And so it is war.
The bull of the proletariat has got his head down.

ST JOHN

John, oh John,
Thou honourable bird,
Sun-peering eagle.

Taking a bird's-eye view
Even of Calvary and Resurrection
Not to speak of Babylon's whoredom.

High over the mild effulgence of the dove
Hung all the time, did we but know it, the all-knowing
shadow
Of John's great gold-barred eagle.

John knew all about it
Even the very beginning.

" In the beginning was the Word
And the Word was God
And the Word was with God."

Having been to school
John knew the whole proposition.
As for innocent Jesus
He was one of Nature's phenomena, no doubt.

Oh that mind-soaring eagle of an Evangelist
Staring creation out of countenance
And telling it off
As an eagle staring down on the Sun !

The Logos, the Logos !
" In the beginning was the Word."

Is there not a great Mind pre-ordaining ?
Does not a supreme Intellect ideally procreate the Universe ?
Is not each soul a vivid thought in the great consciousness stream of God ?

Put salt on his tail
The sly bird of John.

Proud intellect, high-soaring Mind
Like a king eagle, bird of the most High, sweeping the round of heaven
And casting the cycles of creation
On two wings, like a pair of compasses ;
Jesus' pale and lambent dove, cooing in the lower boughs
On sufferance.

In the beginning was the Word, of course.
And the word was the first offspring of the almighty Johannine mind,
Chick of the intellectual eagle.

Yet put salt on the tail of the Johannine bird
Put salt on its tail
John's eagle.

Shoo it down out of the empyrean
Of the all-seeing, all-fore-ordaining ideal.
Make it roost on bird-spattered, rocky Patmos
And let it moult there, among the stones of the bitter sea.

For the almighty eagle of the fore-ordaining Mind
Is looking rather shabby and island-bound these days :
Moulting, and rather naked about the rump, and down in the beak,
Rather dirty, on dung-whitened Patmos.

From which we are led to assume
That the old bird is weary, and almost willing
That a new chick should chip the extensive shell
Of the mundane egg.

The poor old golden eagle of the word-fledged spirit
Moulting and moping and waiting, willing at last
For the fire to burn it up, feathers and all,
So that a new conception of the beginning and end
Can rise from the ashes.

Ah Phœnix, Phœnix,
John's Eagle !
You are only known to us now as the badge of an insurance
Company.

Phœnix, Phœnix,
The nest is in flames,
Feathers are singeing,
Ash flutters flocculent, like down on a blue, wan fledgeling.

San Gervasio.

CREATURES

THE MOSQUITO

When did you start your tricks,
Monsieur ?

What do you stand on such high legs for ?
Why this length of shredded shank,
You exaltation ?

Is it so that you shall lift your centre of gravity upwards
And weigh no more than air as you alight upon me,
Stand upon me weightless, you phantom ?

I heard a woman call you the Winged Victory
In sluggish Venice.
You turn your head towards your tail, and smile.

How can you put so much devilry
Into that translucent phantom shred
Of a frail corpus ?

Queer, with your thin wings and your streaming legs,
How you sail like a heron, or a dull clot of air,
A nothingness.

Yet what an aura surrounds you ;
Your evil little aura, prowling, and casting a numbness on
my mind.

That is your trick, your bit of filthy magic :
Invisibility, and the anæsthetic power
To deaden my attention in your direction.

But I know your game now, streaky sorcerer.

Queer, how you stalk and prowl the air
In circles and evasions, enveloping me,
Ghoul on wings
Winged Victory.

Settle, and stand on long thin shanks
Eyeing me sideways, and cunningly conscious that I am aware,
You speck.

I hate the way you lurch off sideways into air
Having read my thoughts against you.

Come then, let us play at unawares,
And see who wins in this sly game of bluff.
Man or mosquito.

You don't know that I exist, and I don't know that you exist.
Now then !

It is your trump,
It is your hateful little trump,
You pointed fiend,
Which shakes my sudden blood to hatred of you :
It is your small, high, hateful bugle in my ear.

Why do you do it ?
Surely it is bad policy.

They say you can't help it.

If that is so, then I believe a little in Providence protecting
the innocent.
But it sounds so amazingly like a slogan,
A yell of triumph as you snatch my scalp.

Blood, red blood
Super-magical
Forbidden liquor.

I behold you stand
For a second enspasmed in oblivion,
Obscenely ecstasied
Sucking live blood,
My blood.

Such silence, such suspended transport,
Such gorging,
Such obscenity of trespass.

You stagger
As well as you may.
Only your accursed hairy frailty,
Your own imponderable weightlessness
Saves you, wafts you away on the very draught my
anger makes in its snatching.

Away with a pæan of derision,
You winged blood-drop.

Can I not overtake you?
Are you one too many for me,
Winged Victory?
Am I not mosquito enough to out-mosquito you?

Queer, what a big stain my sucked blood makes
Beside the infinitesimal faint smear of you!
Queer, what a dim dark smudge you have disappeared
into!

Siracusa.

FISH

Fish, oh Fish,
So little matters !

Whether the waters rise and cover the earth
Or whether the waters wilt in the hollow places,
All one to you.

Aqueous, subaqueous,
Submerged
And wave-thrilled.

As the waters roll
Roll you.
The waters wash,
You wash in oneness
And never emerge.

Never know,
Never grasp.

Your life a sluice of sensation along your sides,
A flush at the flails of your fins, down the whorl of your tail,
And water wetly on fire in the grates of your gills ;
Fixed water-eyes.

Even snakes lie together.

But oh, fish, that rock in water,
You lie only with the waters ;
One touch.

No fingers, no hands and feet, no lips ;
No tender muzzles,
No wistful bellies,
No loins of desire,
None.

You and the naked element,
Sway-wave.
Curvetting bits of tin in the evening light.

Who is it ejects his sperm to the naked flood ?
In the wave-mother ?
Who swims enwombed ?
Who lies with the waters of his silent passion, womb-
element ?
—Fish in the waters under the earth.

What price *his* bread upon the waters ?

Himself all silvery himself
In the element,
No more.

Nothing more.

Himself,
And the element.
Food, of course !
Water-eager eyes,
Mouth-gate open
And strong spine urging, driving ;
And desirous belly gulping.

Fear also !
He knows fear !
Water-eyes craning,
A rush that almost screams,

Almost fish-voice
As the pike comes. . . .
Then gay fear, that turns the tail sprightly, from a shadow.

Food, and fear, and joie de vivre,
Without love.

The other way about :
Joie de vivre, and fear, and food,
All without love.

Quelle joie de vivre
Dans l'eau !
Slowly to gape through the waters,
Alone with the element ;
To sink, and rise, and go to sleep with the waters ;
To speak endless inaudible wavelets into the wave ;
To breathe from the flood at the gills,
Fish-blood slowly running next to the flood, extracting fish-
fire ;
To have the element under one, like a lover ;
And to spring away with a curvetting click in the air,
Provocative.
Dropping back with a slap on the face of the flood.
And merging oneself !

To be a fish !

So utterly without misgiving
To be a fish
In the waters.

Loveless, and so lively !
Born before God was love,
Or life knew loving.
Beautifully beforehand with it all.

Admitted, they swarm in companies,
Fishes.
They drive in shoals.
But soundless, and out of contact.
They exchange no word, no spasm, not even anger.
Not one touch.
Many suspended together, forever apart,
Each one alone with the waters, upon one wave with the
rest.

A magnetism in the water between them only.

I saw a water-serpent swim across the Anapo,
And I said to my heart, *look, look at him!*
With his head up, steering like a bird!
He's a rare one, but he belongs . . .

But sitting in a boat on the Zeller lake
And watching the fishes in the breathing waters
Lift and swim and go their way—

I said to my heart, *who are these?*
And my heart couldn't own them. . . .

A slim young pike, with smart fins
And grey-striped suit, a young cub of a pike
Slouching along away below, half out of sight,
Like a lout on an obscure pavement. . . .

Aha, there's somebody in the know!

But watching closer
That motionless deadly motion,
That unnatural barrel body, that long ghoul nose, . . .
I left off hailing him.

I had made a mistake, I didn't know him,
This grey, monotonous soul in the water,
This intense individual in shadow,
Fish-alive.

I didn't know his God,
I didn't know his God.

Which is perhaps the last admission that life has to wring out of us.

I saw, dimly,
Once a big pike rush,
And small fish fly like splinters.
And I said to my heart, *there are limits*
To you, my heart;
And to the one God.
Fish are beyond me.

Other Gods
Beyond my range . . . gods beyond my God. . . .

They are beyond me, are fishes.
I stand at the pale of my being
And look beyond, and see
Fish, in the outerwards,
As one stands on a bank and looks in.

I have waited with a long rod
And suddenly pulled a gold-and-greenish, lucent fish from below,
And had him fly like a halo round my head,
Lunging in the air on the line.

Unhooked his gorping, water-horny mouth,
And seen his horror-tilted eye,
His red-gold, water-precious, mirror-flat bright eye;
And felt him beat in my hand, with his mucous, leaping life-throb.

And my heart accused itself
Thinking : *I am not the measure of creation.*
This is beyond me, this fish.
His God stands outside my God.

And the gold-and-green pure lacquer-mucus comes off in
my hand,
And the red-gold mirror-eye stares and dies,
And the water-suave contour dims.

But not before I have had to know
He was born in front of my sunrise,
Before my day.

He outstarts me.
And I, a many-fingered horror of daylight to him,
Have made him die.

Fishes
With their gold, red eyes, and green-pure gleam, and
under-gold,
And their pre-world loneliness,
And more-than-lovelessness,
And white meat ;
They move in other circles.

Outsiders.
Water-wayfarers.
Things of one element.
Aqueous,
Each by itself.

Cats, and the Neapolitans,
Sulphur sun-beasts,
Thirst for fish as for more-than-water ;
Water-alive
To quench their over-sulphureous lusts.

But I, I only wonder
And don't know.
I don't know fishes.

In the begimming
Jesus was called The Fish. . . .
And in the end.

Zell-am-See.

BAT

At evening, sitting on this terrace,
When the sun from the west, beyond Pisa, beyond the mountains of Carrara
Departs, and the world is taken by surprise . . .

When the tired flower of Florence is in gloom beneath the glowing
Brown hills surrounding . . .

When under the arches of the Ponte Vecchio
A green light enters against stream, flush from the west,
Against the current of obscure Arno . . .

Look up, and you see things flying
Between the day and the night ;
Swallows with spools of dark thread sewing the shadows together.

A circle swoop, and a quick parabola under the bridge arches
Where light pushes through ;
A sudden turning upon itself of a thing in the air.
A dip to the water.

And you think :
" The swallows are flying so late ! "

Swallows ?

Dark air-life looping
Yet missing the pure loop . . .
A twitch, a twitter, an elastic shudder in flight
And serrated wings against the sky,
Like a glove, a black glove thrown up at the light,
And falling back.

Never swallows !
Bats !
The swallows are gone.

At a wavering instant the swallows give way to bats
By the Ponte Vecchio . . .
Changing guard.

Bats, and an uneasy creeping in one's scalp
As the bats swoop overhead !
Flying madly.

Pipistrello !
Black piper on an infinitesimal pipe.
Little lumps that fly in air and have voices indefinite, wildly vindictive ;

Wings like bits of umbrella.

Bats !

Creatures that hang themselves up like an old rag, to sleep ;
And disgustingly upside down.
Hanging upside down like rows of disgusting old rags
And grinning in their sleep.
Bats !

In China the bat is symbol of happiness.

Not for me !

MAN AND BAT

When I went into my room, at mid-morning,
Say ten o'clock . . .
My room, a crash-box over that great stone rattle
The Via de' Bardi. . . .

When I went into my room at mid-morning,
Why? . . . a bird!

A bird
Flying round the room in insane circles.

In insane circles!
. . . *A bat!*

A disgusting bat
At mid-morning! . . .

Out! Go out!

Round and round and round
With a twitchy, nervous, intolerable flight,
And a neurasthenic lunge,
And an impure frenzy;
A bat, big as a swallow.

Out, out of my room!

The venetian shutters I push wide
To the free, calm upper air;
Loop back the curtains. . . .

Now out, out from my room!

So to drive him out, flicking with my white handkerchief:
Go!
But he will not.

Round and round and round
In an impure haste,
Fumbling, a beast in air,
And stumbling, lunging and touching the walls, the bell-wires
About my room!

Always refusing to go out into the air
Above that crash-gulf of the Via de' Bardi,
Yet blind with frenzy, with cluttered fear.

At last he swerved into the window bay,
But blew back, as if an incoming wind blew him in again.
A strong inrushing wind.

And round and round and round!
Blundering more insane, and leaping, in throbs, to clutch at a corner,
At a wire, at a bell-rope:
On and on, watched relentless by me, round and round in my room,
Round and round and dithering with tiredness and haste and increasing delirium
Flicker-splashing round my room.

I would not let him rest;
Not one instant cleave, cling like a blot with his breast to the wall
In an obscure corner.
Not an instant!

I flicked him on,
Trying to drive him through the window.

Again he swerved into the window bay
And I ran forward, to frighten him forth.
But he rose, and from a terror worse than me he flew past me
Back into my room, and round, round, round in my room
Clutch, cleave, stagger,
Dropping about the air
Getting tired.

Something seemed to blow him back from the window
Every time he swerved at it ;
Back on a strange parabola, then round, round, dizzy in my room.

He *could* not go out,
I also realised. . . .
It was the light of day which he could not enter,
Any more than I could enter the white-hot door of a blast furnace.

He could not plunge into the daylight that streamed at the window.
It was asking too much of his nature.

Worse even than the hideous terror of me with my handkerchief
Saying : *Out, go out !* . . .
Was the horror of white daylight in the window !

So I switched on the electric light, thinking : *Now*
The outside will seem brown. . . .

But no.
The outside did not seem brown.
And he did not mind the yellow electric light.

Silent !
He was having a silent rest.
But never !
Not in my room.

Round and round and round
Near the ceiling as if in a web,
Staggering ;
Plunging, falling out of the web,
Broken in heaviness,
Lunging blindly,
Heavier ;
And clutching, clutching for one second's pause,
Always, as if for one drop of rest,
One little drop.

And I !
Never, I say. . . .
Go out !

Flying slower,
Seeming to stumble, to fall in air.
Blind-weary.

Yet never able to pass the whiteness of light into freedom . . .
A bird would have dashed through, come what might.

Fall, sink, lurch, and round and round
Flicker, flicker-heavy ;
Even wings heavy :
And cleave in a high corner for a second, like a clot, also a
prayer.

But no.
Out, you beast.

Till he fell in a corner, palpitating, spent.
And there, a clot, he squatted and looked at me.
With sticking-out, bead-berry eyes, black,
And improper derisive ears,
And shut wings,
And brown, furry body.

Brown, nut-brown, fine fur !
But it might as well have been hair on a spider ; thing
With long, black-paper ears.

So, a dilemma !
He squatted there like something unclean.

No, he must not squat, nor hang, obscene, in my room !

Yet nothing on earth will give him courage to pass the sweet
fire of day.

What then ?
Hit him and kill him and throw him away ?

Nay,
I didn't create him.
Let the God that created him be responsible for his death . . .
Only, in the bright day, I will not have this clot in my room.

Let the God who is maker of bats watch with them in their
unclean corners. . . .
I admit a God in every crevice,
But not bats in my room ;
Nor the God of bats, while the sun shines.

So out, out, you brute ! . . .
And he lunged, flight-heavy, away from me, sideways, *a sghembo !*
And round and round and round my room, a clot with wings,
Impure even in weariness.

Wings dark skinny and flapping the air,
Lost their flicker.
Spent.

He fell again with a little thud
Near the curtain on the floor.
And there lay.

Ah death, death
You are no solution !
Bats must be bats.

Only life has a way out.
And the human soul is fated to wide-eyed responsibility
In life.

So I picked him up in a flannel jacket,
Well covered, lest he should bite me.
For I would have had to kill him if he'd bitten me, the impure one. . . .
And he hardly stirred in my hand, muffled up.

Hastily, I shook him out of the window.

And away he went !
Fear craven in his tail.
Great haste, and straight, almost bird straight above the Via de' Bardi.
Above that crash-gulf of exploding whips,
Towards the Borgo San Jacopo.

And now, at evening, as he flickers over the river
Dipping with petty triumphant flight, and tittering over the sun's departure,
I believe he chirps, pipistrello, seeing me here on this terrace writing :
There he sits, the long loud one !
But I am greater than he . . .
I escaped him. . . .

Florence.

REPTILES

SNAKE

A SNAKE came to my water-trough
On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,
To drink there.

In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob-tree
I came down the steps with my pitcher
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at the trough before me.

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over the edge of the stone trough
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small clearness,
He sipped with his straight mouth,
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body,
Silently.

Someone was before me at my water-trough,
And I, like a second comer, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused a moment,
And stooped and drank a little more,
Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning bowels of the earth
On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.

The voice of my education said to me
He must be killed,
For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold are venomous.

And voices in me said, If you were a man
You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off.

But must I confess how I liked him,
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink at my water-trough
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,
Into the burning bowels of this earth ?

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him ?
Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him ?
Was it humility, to feel so honoured ?
I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices :
If you were not afraid, you would kill him !

And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid,
But even so, honoured still more
That he should seek my hospitality
From out the dark door of the secret earth.

He drank enough
And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,
And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air, so black,
Seeming to lick his lips,
And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air,
And slowly turned his head,
And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream,
Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round
And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders, and entered farther,
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing into that horrid black hole,
Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing himself after,
Overcame me now his back was turned.

I looked round, I put down my pitcher,
I picked up a clumsy log
And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.

I think it did not hit him,
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind convulsed in undignified haste,
Writhed like lightning, and was gone
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-front,
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.

And immediately I regretted it.
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education.

And I thought of the albatross,
And I wished he would come back, my snake.

For he seemed to me again like a king,
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
Now due to be crowned again.

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
Of life.
And I have something to expiate;
A pettiness.

Taormina.

BABY TORTOISE

You know what it is to be born alone,
Baby tortoise !

The first day to heave your feet little by little from the shell,
Not yet awake,
And remain lapsed on earth,
Not quite alive.

A tiny, fragile, half-animate bean.

To open your tiny beak-mouth, that looks as if it would never
open,
Like some iron door ;
To lift the upper hawk-beak from the lower base
And reach your skinny little neck
And take your first bite at some dim bit of herbage,
Alone, small insect,
Tiny bright-eye,
Slow one.

To take your first solitary bite
And move on your slow, solitary hunt.
Your bright, dark little eye,
Your eye of a dark disturbed night,
Under its slow lid, tiny baby tortoise,
So indomitable.

No one ever heard you complain.

You draw your head forward, slowly, from your little wimple
And set forward, slow-dragging, on your four-pinned toes,
Rowing slowly forward.
Whither away, small bird ?

Rather like a baby working its limbs,
Except that you make slow, ageless progress
And a baby makes none.

The touch of sun excites you,
And the long ages, and the lingering chill
Make you pause to yawn,
Opening your impervious mouth,
Suddenly beak-shaped, and very wide, like some suddenly
gaping pincers ;
Soft red tongue, and hard thin gums,
Then close the wedge of your little mountain front,
Your face, baby tortoise.

Do you wonder at the world, as slowly you turn your
head in its wimple
And look with laconic, black eyes ?
Or is sleep coming over you again,
The non-life ?

You are so hard to wake.

Are you able to wonder ?
Or is it just your indomitable will and pride of the first
life
Looking round
And slowly pitching itself against the inertia
Which had seemed invincible ?

The vast inanimate,
And the fine brilliance of your so tiny eye,
Challenger.

Nay, tiny shell-bird,
What a huge vast inanimate it is, that you must row against,
What an incalculable inertia.

Challenger,
Little Ulysses, fore-runner,
No bigger than my thumb-nail,
Buon viaggio.

All animate creation on your shoulder,
Set forth, little Titan, under your battle-shield.

The ponderous, preponderate,
Inanimate universe ;
And you are slowly moving, pioneer, you alone.

How vivid your travelling seems now, in the troubled sunshine,
Stoic, Ulyssean atom ;
Suddenly hasty, reckless, on high toes.

Voiceless little bird,
Resting your head half out of your wimple
In the slow dignity of your eternal pause.
Alone, with no sense of being alone,
And hence six times more solitary ;
Fulfilled of the slow passion of pitching through immemorial ages
Your little round house in the midst of chaos.

Over the garden earth,
Small bird,
Over the edge of all things.

Traveller,
With your tail tucked a little on one side
Like a gentleman in a long-skirted coat.

All life carried on your shoulder,
Invincible fore-runner.

TORTOISE SHELL

The Cross, the Cross
Goes deeper in than we know,
Deeper into life ;
Right into the marrow
And through the bone.

Along the back of the baby tortoise
The scales are locked in an arch like a bridge,
Scale-lapping, like a lobster's sections
Or a bee's.

Then crossways down his sides
Tiger-stripes and wasp-bands.

Five, and five again, and five again,
And round the edges twenty-five little ones,
The sections of the baby tortoise shell.

Four, and a keystone ;
Four, and a keystone ;
Four, and a keystone ;
Then twenty-four, and a tiny little keystone.

It needed Pythagoras to see life playing with counters
on the living back
Of the baby tortoise ;
Life establishing the first eternal mathematical tablet,
Not in stone, like the Judean Lord, or bronze, but in
life-clouded, life-rosy tortoise shell.

The first little mathematical gentleman
Stepping, wee mite, in his loose trousers
Under all the eternal dome of mathematical law.

Fives, and tens,
Threes and fours and twelves,
All the *volte face* of decimals,
The whirligig of dozens and the pinnacle of seven.

Turn him on his back,
The kicking little beetle,
And there again, on his shell-tender, earth-touching belly,
The long cleavage of division, upright of the eternal cross
And on either side count five,
On each side, two above, on each side, two below
The dark bar horizontal.

The Cross !
It goes right through him, the sprottling insect,
Through his cross-wise cloven psyche,
Through his five-fold complex-nature.

So turn him over on his toes again ;
Four pin-point toes, and a problematical thumb-piece,
Four rowing limbs, and one wedge-balancing head,
Four and one makes five, which is the clue to all mathematics.

The Lord wrote it all down on the little slate
Of the baby tortoise.
Outward and visible indication of the plan within,
The complex, manifold involvedness of an individual creature
Plotted out
On this small bird, this rudiment,
This little dome, this pediment
Of all creation,
This slow one.

TORTOISE FAMILY CONNECTIONS

On he goes, the little one,
Bud of the universe,
Pediment of life.

Setting off somewhere, apparently.
Whither away, brisk egg ?

His mother deposited him on the soil as if he were no more
than droppings,
And now he scuffles tinily past her as if she were an old rusty
tin.

A mere obstacle,
He veers round the slow great mound of her—
Tortoises always foresee obstacles.

It is no use my saying to him in an emotional voice :
" This is your Mother, she laid you when you were an egg."

He does not even trouble to answer : " Woman, what have I
to do with thee ? "
He wearily looks the other way,
And she even more wearily looks another way still,
Each with the utmost apathy,
Incognisant,
Unaware,
Nothing.

As for papa,
He snaps when I offer him his offspring,
Just as he snaps when I poke a bit of stick at him,
Because he is irascible this morning, an irascible tortoise
Being touched with love, and devoid of fatherliness.

Father and mother,
And three little brothers,
And all rambling aimless, like little perambulating pebbles
scattered in the garden,
Not knowing each other from bits of earth or old tins.

Except that papa and mama are old acquaintances, of course,
Though family feeling there is none, not even the beginnings.

Fatherless, motherless, brotherless, sisterless
Little tortoise.

Row on then, small pebble,
Over the clods of the autumn, wind-chilled sunshine,
Young gaiety.

Does he look for a companion ?

No, no, don't think it.
He doesn't know he is alone ;
Isolation is his birthright,
This atom.

To row forward, and reach himself tall on spiny toes,
To travel, to burrow into a little loose earth, afraid of the
night,
To crop a little substance,
To move, and to be quite sure that he is moving :
Basta !
To be a tortoise !
Think of it, in a garden of inert clods
A brisk, brindled little tortoise, all to himself—
Adam !

In a garden of pebbles and insects
To roam, and feel the slow heart beat
Tortoise-wise, the first bell sounding
From the warm blood, in the dark-creation morning.

Moving, and being himself,
Slow, and unquestioned,
And inordinately there, O stoic!
Wandering in the slow triumph of his own existence,
Ringing the soundless bell of his presence in chaos,
And biting the frail grass arrogantly,
Decidedly arrogantly.

LUI ET ELLE

She is large and matronly
And rather dirty,
A little sardonic-looking, as if domesticity had driven her to it.

Though what she does, except lay four eggs at random in the garden once a year
And put up with her husband,
I don't know.

She likes to eat.
She hurries up, striding reared on long uncanny legs
When food is going.
Oh yes, she can make haste when she likes.

She snaps the soft bread from my hand in great mouthfuls,
Opening her rather pretty wedge of an iron, pristine face
Into an enormously wide-beaked mouth
Like sudden curved scissors,
And gulping at more than she can swallow, and working her thick, soft tongue,
And having the bread hanging over her chin.

O Mistress, Mistress,
Reptile mistress,
Your eye is very dark, very bright,
And it never softens
Although you watch.

She knows,
She knows well enough to come for food,

Yet she sees me not;
Her bright eye sees, but not me, not anything,
Sightful, sightless, seeing and visionless,
Reptile mistress.

Taking bread in her curved, gaping, toothless mouth,
She has no qualm when she catches my finger in her steel overlapping gums,
But she hangs on, and my shout and my shrinking are nothing to her.
She does not even know she is nipping me with her curved beak.
Snake-like she draws at my finger, while I drag it in horror away.

Mistress, reptile mistress,
You are almost too large, I am almost frightened.

He is much smaller,
Dapper beside her,
And ridiculously small.

Her laconic eye has an earthy, materialistic look,
His, poor darling, is almost fiery.

His wimple, his blunt-prowed face,
His low forehead, his skinny neck, his long, scaled, striving legs,
So striving, striving,
Are all more delicate than she,
And he has a cruel scar on his shell.

Poor darling, biting at her feet,
Running beside her like a dog, biting her earthy, splay feet,
Nipping her ankles,
Which she drags apathetic away, though without retreating into her shell.

Agelessly silent,
And with a grim, reptile determination,
Cold, voiceless age-after-age behind him, serpents' long obstinacy
Of horizontal persistence.

Little old man
Scuffling beside her, bending down, catching his opportunity,
Parting his steel-trap face, so suddenly, and seizing her scaly ankle,
And hanging grimly on,
Letting go at last as she drags away,
And closing his steel-trap face.

His steel-trap, stoic, ageless, handsome face.
Alas, what a fool he looks in this scuffle.

And how he feels it!
The lonely rambler, the stoic, dignified stalker through chaos,
The immune, the animate,
Enveloped in isolation,
Fore-runner.
Now look at him!

Alas, the spear is through the side of his isolation.
His adolescence saw him crucified into sex,
Doomed, in the long crucifixion of desire, to seek his consummation beyond himself.
Divided into passionate duality,
He, so finished and immune, now broken into desirous fragmentariness,
Doomed to make an intolerable fool of himself
In his effort toward completion again.

Poor little earthy house-inhabiting Osiris,
The mysterious bull tore him at adolescence into pieces,
And he must struggle after reconstruction, ignominiously.

And so behold him following the tail
Of that mud-hovel of his slowly rambling spouse,
Like some unhappy bull at the tail of a cow,
But with more than bovine, grim, earth-dank persistence.

Suddenly seizing the ugly ankle as she stretches out to walk,
Roaming over the sods,
Or, if it happen to show, at her pointed, heavy tail
Beneath the low-dropping back-board of her shell.

Their two shells like domed boats bumping,
Hers huge, his small;
Their splay feet rambling and rowing like paddles,
And stumbling mixed up in one another,
In the race of love—
Two tortoises,
She huge, he small.

She seems earthily apathetic,
And he has a reptile's awful persistence.

I heard a woman pitying her, pitying the Mere Tortue.
While I, I pity Monsieur.
"He pesters her and torments her," said the woman.
How much more is *he* pestered and tormented, say I.

What can he do?
He is dumb, he is visionless,
Conceptionless.
His black, sad-lidded eye sees but beholds not
As her earthen mound moves on,
But he catches the folds of vulnerable, leathery skin,
Nail-studded, that shake beneath her shell,
And drags at these with his beak,
Drags and drags and bites,
While she pulls herself free, and rows her dull mound along.

TORTOISE GALLANTRY

Making his advances
He does not look at her, nor sniff at her,
No, not even sniff at her, his nose is blank.

Only he senses the vulnerable folds of skin
That work beneath her while she sprawls along
In her ungainly pace,
Her folds of skin that work and row
Beneath the earth-soiled hovel in which she moves.

And so he strains beneath her housey walls
And catches her trouser-legs in his beak
Suddenly, or her skinny limb,
And strange and grimly drags at her
Like a dog,
Only agelessly silent, with a reptile's awful persistency.

Grim, gruesome gallantry, to which he is doomed.
Dragged out of an eternity of silent isolation
And doomed to partiality, partial being,
Ache, and want of being,
Want,
Self-exposure, hard humiliation, need to add himself on
to her.

Born to walk alone,
Fore-runner,
Now suddenly distracted into this mazy side-track,
This awkward, harrowing pursuit,
This grim necessity from within.

Does she know
As she moves eternally slowly away ?
Or is he driven against her with a bang, like a bird flying
in the dark against a window,
All knowledgeless ?

The awful concussion,
And the still more awful need to persist, to follow, follow,
continue,

Driven, after æons of pristine, fore-god-like singleness and
oneness,
At the end of some mysterious, red-hot iron,
Driven away from himself into her tracks,
Forced to crash against her.

Stiff, gallant, irascible, crook-legged reptile,
Little gentleman,
Sorry plight,
We ought to look the other way.

Save that, having come with you so far,
We will go on to the end.

TORTOISE SHOUT

I THOUGHT he was dumb,
I said he was dumb,
Yet I've heard him cry.

First faint scream,
Out of life's unfathomable dawn,
Far off, so far, like a madness, under the horizon's dawning rim,
Far, far off, far scream.

Tortoise *in extremis*.

Why were we crucified into sex ?
Why were we not left rounded off, and finished in ourselves,
As we began,
As he certainly began, so perfectly alone ?

A far, was-it-audible scream,
Or did it sound on the plasm direct ?

Worse than the cry of the new-born,
A scream,
A yell,
A shout,
A pæan,
A death-agony,
A birth-cry,
A submission,
All tiny, tiny, far away, reptile under the first dawn.

War-cry, triumph, acute-delight, death-scream reptilian,
Why was the veil torn ?
The silken shriek of the soul's torn membrane ?
The male soul's membrane
Torn with a shriek half music, half horror.

Crucifixion.
Male tortoise, cleaving behind the hovel-wall of that dense female,
Mounted and tense, spread-eagle, out-reaching out of the shell
In tortoise-nakedness,
Long neck, and long vulnerable limbs extruded, spread-eagle over her house-roof,
And the deep, secret, all-penetrating tail curved beneath her walls,
Reaching and gripping tense, more reaching anguish in uttermost tension
Till suddenly, in the spasm of coition, tupping like a jerking leap, and oh!
Opening its clenched face from his outstretched neck
And giving that fragile yell, that scream,
Super-audible,
From his pink, cleft, old-man's mouth,
Giving up the ghost,
Or screaming in Pentecost, receiving the ghost.

His scream, and his moment's subsidence,
The moment of eternal silence,
Yet unreleased, and after the moment, the sudden, startling jerk of coition, and at once
The inexpressible faint yell—
And so on, till the last plasm of my body was melted back
To the primeval rudiments of life, and the secret.

So he tups, and screams
Time after time that frail, torn scream
After each jerk, the longish interval,
The tortoise eternity,
Age-long, reptilian persistence,
Heart-throb, slow heart-throb, persistent for the next spasm.

I remember, when I was a boy,
I heard the scream of a frog, which was caught with his foot in the mouth of an up-starting snake ;
I remember when I first heard bull-frogs break into sound in the spring ;
I remember hearing a wild goose out of the throat of night
Cry loudly, beyond the lake of waters ;
I remember the first time, out of a bush in the darkness, a nightingale's piercing cries and gurgles startled the depths of my soul ;
I remember the scream of a rabbit as I went through a wood at midnight ;
I remember the heifer in her heat, blorting and blorting through the hours, persistent and irrepressible ;
I remember my first terror hearing the howl of weird, amorous cats ;
I remember the scream of a terrified, injured horse, the sheet-lightning,
And running away from the sound of a woman in labour, something like an owl whooing,
And listening inwardly to the first bleat of a lamb,
The first wail of an infant,
And my mother singing to herself,
And the first tenor singing of the passionate throat of a young collier, who has long since drunk himself to death,
The first elements of foreign speech
On wild dark lips.

And more than all these,
And less than all these,
This last,
Strange, faint coition yell
Of the male tortoise at extremity,
Tiny from under the very edge of the farthest far-off horizon of life.

The cross,
The wheel on which our silence first is broken,
Sex, which breaks up our integrity, our single inviolability, our deep silence,
Tearing a cry from us.

Sex, which breaks us into voice, sets us calling across the deeps, calling, calling for the complement,
Singing, and calling, and singing again, being answered, having found.

Torn, to become whole again, after long seeking for what is lost,
The same cry from the tortoise as from Christ, the Osiris-cry of abandonment,
That which is whole, torn asunder,
That which is in part, finding its whole again throughout the universe.

BIRDS

TURKEY-COCK

You ruffled black blossom,
You glossy dark wind.

Your sort of gorgeousness,
Dark and lustrous
And skinny repulsive
And poppy-glossy,
Is the gorgeousness that evokes my most puzzled admiration.

Your aboriginality
Deep, unexplained,
Like a Red Indian darkly unfinished and aloof,
Seems like the black and glossy seeds of countless centuries.

Your wattles are the colour of steel-slag which has been red-hot
And is going cold,
Cooling to a powdery, pale-oxydised sky-blue.

Why do you have wattles, and a naked, wattled head?
Why do you arch your naked-set eye with a more-than-comprehensible arrogance?

The vulture is bald, so is the condor, obscenely,
But only you have thrown this amazing mantilla of oxydised sky-blue
And hot red over you.

This queer dross shawl of blue and vermilion,
Whereas the peacock has a diadem.

I wonder why.
Perhaps it is a sort of uncanny decoration, a veil of loose skin.
Perhaps it is your assertion, in all this ostentation, of raw contradictoriness.
Your wattles drip down like a shawl to your breast
And the point of your mantilla drops across your nose, unpleasantly.

Or perhaps it is something unfinished
A bit of slag still adhering, after your firing in the furnace of creation.

Or perhaps there is something in your wattles of a bull's dewlap
Which slips down like a pendulum to balance the throbbing mass of a generous breast,

The over-drip of a great passion hanging in the balance.
Only yours would be a raw, unsmelted passion, that will not quite fuse from the dross.

You contract yourself,
You arch yourself as an archer's bow
Which quivers indrawn as you clench your spine
Until your veiled head almost touches backward
To the root-rising of your erected tail.
And one intense and backward-curving frisson
Seizes you as you clench yourself together
Like some fierce magnet bringing its poles together.

Burning, pale positive pole of your wattled head!
And from the darkness of that opposite one
The upstart of your round-barred, sun-round tail!

Whilst between the two, along the tense arch of your back
Blows the magnetic current in fierce blasts,
Ruffling black, shining feathers like lifted mail,
Shuddering storm wind, or a water rushing through.

Your brittle, super-sensual arrogance
Tosses the crape of red across your brow and down your breast
As you draw yourself upon yourself in insistence.

It is a declaration of such tension in will
As time has not dared to avouch, nor eternity been able to unbend
Do what it may.
A raw American will, that has never been tempered by life ;
You brittle, will-tense bird with a foolish eye.

The peacock lifts his rods of bronze
And struts blue-brilliant out of the far East.
But watch a turkey prancing low on earth
Drumming his vaulted wings, as savages drum
Their rhythms on long-drawn, hollow, sinister drums.
The ponderous, sombre sound of the great drum of Huichilobos
In pyramid Mexico, during sacrifice.

Drum, and the turkey onrush
Sudden, demonic dauntlessness, full abreast,
All the bronze gloss of all his myriad petals
Each one apart and instant.
Delicate frail crescent of the gentle outline of white
At each feather-tip
So delicate :
Yet the bronze wind-bell suddenly clashing
And the eye overweening into madness.

Turkey-cock, turkey-cock,
Are you the bird of the next dawn ?

Has the peacock had his day, does he call in vain, screecher,
for the sun to rise ?
The eagle, the dove, and the barnyard rooster, do they call in
vain, trying to wake the morrow ?
And do you await us, wattled father, Westward ?
Will your yell do it ?

Take up the trail of the vanished American
Where it disappeared at the foot of the crucifix.
Take up the primordial Indian obstinacy,
The more than human, dense insistence of will,
And disdain, and blankness, and onrush, and prise open the new
day with them ?

The East a dead letter, and Europe moribund. . . . Is that so ?
And those sombre, dead, feather-lustrous Aztecs, Amerindians
In all the sinister splendour of their red blood-sacrifices,
Do they stand under the dawn, half-godly, half-demon, awaiting
the cry of the turkey-cock ?

Or must you go through the fire once more, till you're smelted
pure,
Slag-wattled turkey-cock,
Dross-jabot ?

Fiesole.

HUMMING-BIRD

I CAN imagine, in some otherworld
Primeval-dumb, far back
In that most awful stillness, that only gasped and hummed,
Humming-birds raced down the avenues.

Before anything had a soul,
While life was a heave of Matter, half inanimate,
This little bit chipped off in brilliance
And went whizzing through the slow, vast, succulent stems.

I believe there were no flowers then,
In the world where the humming-bird flashed ahead of creation.
I believe he pierced the slow vegetable veins with his long beak.

Probably he was big
As mosses, and little lizards, they say, were once big.
Probably he was a jabbing, terrifying monster.

We look at him through the wrong end of the long telescope of
Time,
Luckily for us.

Española.

EAGLE IN NEW MEXICO

Towards the sun, towards the south-west
A scorched breast.
A scorched breast, breasting the sun like an answer,
Like a retort.

An eagle at the top of a low cedar-bush
On the sage-ash desert
Reflecting the scorch of the sun from his breast ;
Eagle, with the sickle dripping darkly above.

Erect, scorched-pallid out of the hair of the cedar,
Erect, with the god-thrust entering him from below,
Eagle gloved in feathers
In scorched white feathers
In burnt dark feathers
In feathers still fire-rusted ;
Sickle-overswept, sickle dripping over and above.

Sun-breaster,
Staring two ways at once, to right and left ;
Masked-one
Dark-visaged
Sickle-masked
With iron between your two eyes ;
You feather-gloved
To the feet ;
Foot-fierce ;
Erect one ;
The god-thrust entering you steadily from below.

You never look at the sun with your two eyes.
Only the inner eye of your scorched broad breast
Looks straight at the sun.

You are dark
Except scorch-pale-breasted ;
And dark cleaves down and weapon-hard downward curving
At your scorched breast,
Like a sword of Damocles,
Beaked eagle.

You've dipped it in blood so many times
That dark face-weapon, to temper it well,
Blood-thirsty bird.

Why do you front the sun so obstinately,
American eagle ?
As if you owed him an old, old grudge, great sun : or an old, old allegiance.

When you pick the red smoky heart from a rabbit or a light-blooded bird
Do you lift it to the sun, as the Aztec priests used to lift red hearts of men ?

Does the sun need steam of blood do you think
In America, still,
Old eagle ?

Does the sun in New Mexico sail like a fiery bird of prey in the sky
Hovering ?

Does he shriek for blood ?
Does he fan great wings above the prairie, like a hovering, blood-thirsty bird ?

And are you his priest, big eagle
Whom the Indians aspire to ?
Is there a bond of bloodshed between you ?

Is your continent cold from the ice-age still, that the sun is so
angry ?
Is the blood of your continent somewhat reptilian still,
That the sun should be greedy for it ?

I don't yield to you, big, jowl-faced eagle.
Nor you nor your blood-thirsty sun
That sucks up blood
Leaving a nervous people.

Fly off, big bird with a big black back.
Fly slowly away, with a rust of fire in your tail,
Dark as you are on your dark side, eagle of heaven.

Even the sun in heaven can be curbed and chastened at last
By the life in the hearts of men.
And you, great bird, sun-starer, heavy black beak
Can be put out of office as sacrifice bringer.

Taos.

THE BLUE JAY

The blue jay with a crest on his head
Comes round the cabin in the snow.
He runs in the snow like a bit of blue metal,
Turning his back on everything.

From the pine-tree that towers and hisses like a pillar of shaggy cloud
Immense above the cabin
Comes a strident laugh as we approach, this little black dog and I.
So halts the little black bitch on four spread paws in the snow
And looks up inquiringly into the pillar of cloud,
With a tinge of misgiving.
Ca-a-a ! comes the scrape of ridicule out of the tree.

What voice of the Lord is that, from the tree of smoke ?

Oh, Bibbles, little black bitch in the snow,
With a pinch of snow in the groove of your silly snub nose,
What do you look at *me* for ?
What do you look at me for, with such misgiving ?

It's the blue jay laughing at us.
It's the blue jay jeering at us, Bibs.

Every day since the snow is here
The blue jay paces round the cabin, very busy, picking up bits,
Turning his back on us all,
And bobbing his thick dark crest about the snow, as if darkly saying :
I ignore those folk who look out.

You acid-blue metallic bird,
You thick bird with a strong crest,
Who are you ?
Whose boss are you, with all your bully way ?
You copper-sulphate blue bird !

Lobo.

ANIMALS

THE ASS

The long-drawn bray of the ass
In the Sicilian twilight—

All mares are dead !
All mares are dead !
Oh–h !
Oh–h–h !
Oh–h–h–h–h—h ! !
I can't bear it, I can't bear it.
I can't !
Oh, I can't !
Oh—
There's one left !
There's one left !
One !
There's one . . . left. . . .

So ending on a grunt of agonised relief.

This is the authentic Arabic interpretation of the braying
of the ass.
And Arabs should know.

And yet, as his brass-resonant howling yell resounds through
the Sicilian twilight
I am not sure—

His big, furry head,
His big, regretful eyes,
His diminished, drooping hindquarters,
His small toes.

Such a dear !
Such an ass !
With such a knot inside him !
He regrets something that he remembers.
That's obvious.

The Steppes of Tartary,
And the wind in his teeth for a bit,
And *noli me tangere.*

Ah then, when he tore the wind with his teeth,
And trod wolves underfoot,
And over-rode his mares as if he were savagely leaping an
obstacle, to set his teeth in the sun. . . .

Somehow, alas, he fell in love,
And was sold into slavery.

He fell into the rut of love,
Poor ass, like man, always in rut,
The pair of them alike in that.

All his soul in his gallant member
And his head gone heavy with the knowledge of desire
And humiliation.

The ass was the first of all animals to fall finally into love,
From obstacle-leaping pride,
Mare obstacle,
Into love, mare-goal, and the knowledge of love.

Hence Jesus rode him in the Triumphant Entry.
Hence his beautiful eyes.
Hence his ponderous head, brooding over desire, and downfall,
Jesus, and a pack-saddle,

Hence he uncovers his big ass-teeth and howls in that agony
that is half insatiable desire and half unquenchable
humiliation.
Hence the black cross on his shoulders.

The Arabs were only half right, though they hinted the whole ;
Everlasting lament in everlasting desire.

See him standing with his head down, near the Porta Cap-
puccini,
Asinello, Ciuco,
Somaro ;
With the half-veiled, beautiful eyes, and the pensive face not
asleep,
Motionless, like a bit of rock.

Has he seen the Gorgon's head, and turned to stone ?
Alas, Love did it.
Now he's a jackass, a pack-ass, a donkey, somaro, burro, with
a boss piling loads on his back.
Tied by the nose at the Porta Cappuccini.
And tied in a knot, inside, dead-locked between two desires :
To overleap like a male all mares as obstacles
In a leap at the sun ;
And to leap in one last heart-bursting leap like a male at the
goal of a mare.
And there end.
Well, you can't have it both roads.

Hee ! Hee ! Ehee ! Ehow ! Ehaw ! ! Oh ! Oh ! Oh-h-h ! !
The wave of agony bursts in the stone that he was,
Bares his long ass's teeth, flattens his long ass's ears, straightens
his donkey neck,
And howls his pandemonium on the indignant air.

Yes, it's a quandary.
Jesus rode on him, the first burden on the first beast of burden.
Love on a submissive ass.
So the tale began.

But the ass never forgets.

The horse, being nothing but a nag, will forget.
And men, being mostly geldings and knacker-boned hacks, have almost all forgot.
But the ass is a primal creature, and never forgets.

The Steppes of Tartary,
And Jesus on a meek ass-colt : mares : Mary escaping to Egypt : Joseph's cudgel.

Hee ! Hee ! Ehee ! Ehow–ow !–ow !–aw !–aw !–aw !
All mares are dead !

Or else I am dead !
One of us, or the pair of us,
I don't know–ow !–ow !
Which !
Not sure–ure–ure
Quite which !
Which !

Taormina.

HE-GOAT

See his black nose snubbed back, pressed over like a whale's
blow-holes,
As if his nostrils were going to curve back to the root of his tail.

As he charges slow among the herd
And rows among the females like a ship pertinaciously,
Heavy with a rancid cargo, through the lesser ships—
Old father
Sniffing forever ahead of him, at the rear of the goats, that they
lift the little door,
And rowing on, unarrived, no matter how often he enter :
Like a big ship pushing her bowsprit over the little ships
Then swerving and steering afresh
And never, never arriving at journey's end, at the rear of the
female ships.

Yellow eyes incomprehensible with thin slits
To round-eyed us.

Yet if you had whorled horns of bronze in a frontal dark wall
At the end of a back-bone ridge, like a straight *sierra roqueña*,
And nerves urging forward to the wall, you'd have eyes like
his,
Especially if, being given a needle's eye of egress elsewhere
You tried to look back to it, and couldn't.

Sometimes he turns with a start, to fight, to challenge, to
suddenly butt.
And then you see the God that he is, in a cloud of black hair
And storm-lightning-slitted eye.
Splendidly planting his feet, one rocky foot striking the ground
with a sudden rock-hammer announcement.

I am here !
And suddenly lowering his head, the whorls of bone and of ho
Slowly revolving towards unexploded explosion,
As from the stem of his bristling, lightning-conductor tail
In a rush up the shrieking duct of his vertebral way
Runs a rage drawn in from the ether divinely through him
Towards a shock and a crash and a smiting of horns ahead.

That is a grand old lust of his, to gather the great
Rage of the sullen-stagnating atmosphere of goats
And bring it hurtling to a head, with crash of horns against t
horns
Of the opposite enemy goat,
Thus hammering the mettle of goats into proof, and smiting o
The godhead of goats from the shock.

Things of iron are beaten on the anvil,
And he-goat is anvil to he-goat, and hammer to he-goat
In the business of beating the mettle of goats to a godhead.

But they've taken his enemy from him
And left him only his libidinousness,
His nostrils turning back, to sniff at even himself
And his slitted eyes seeking the needle's eye,
His own, unthreaded, forever.

So it is, when they take the enemy from us,
And we can't fight.

He is not fatherly, like the bull, massive Providence of
blood ;
The goat is an egoist, aware of himself, devilish aware
himself,
And full of malice prepense, and overweening, determined
stand on the highest peak
Like the devil, and look on the world as his own.

And as for love :
With a needle of long red flint he stabs in the dark
At the living rock he is up against ;
While she with her goaty mouth stands smiling the while as he strikes, since sure
He will never *quite* strike home, on the target-quick, for her quick
Is just beyond range of the arrow he shoots
From his leap at the zenith in her, so it falls just short of the mark, far enough.
It is over before it is finished.
She, smiling with goaty munch-mouth, Mona Lisa, arranges it so.

Orgasm after orgasm after orgasm
And he smells so rank and his nose goes back,
And never an enemy brow-metalled to thresh it out with in the open field ;
Never a mountain peak, to be king of the castle.
Only those eternal females to overleap and surpass, and never succeed.

The involved voluptuousness of the soft-footed cat
Who is like a fur folding a fur,
The cat who laps blood, and knows
The soft welling of blood invincible even beyond bone or metal of bone.

The soft, the secret, the unfathomable blood
The cat has lapped ;
And known it subtler than frisson-shaken nerves,
Stronger than multiplicity of bone on bone,
And darker than even the arrows of violentest will
Can pierce, for that is where will gives out, like a sinking stone that can sink no further.

But he-goat,
Black procreant male of the selfish will and libidinous desire,
God in black cloud with curving horns of bronze,
Find an enemy, Egoist, and clash the cymbals in face-to-face
defiance,
And let the lightning out of your smothered dusk.

Forget the female herd for a bit,
And fight to be boss of the world.

Fight, old Satan with a selfish will, fight for your selfish will ;
Fight to be the devil on the tip of the peak
Overlooking the world for his own.

But bah, how can he, poor domesticated beast !

Taormina.

SHE-GOAT

Goats go past the back of the house like dry leaves in the dawn,
And up the hill like a river, if you watch.

At dusk they patter back like a bough being dragged on the ground,
Raising dusk and acridity of goats, and bleating.

Our old goat we tie up at night in the shed at the back of the broken Greek tomb in the garden,
And when the herd goes by at dawn she begins to bleat for me to come down and untie her.

Merr-err-err ! Merr-er-errr ! Mer ! Mé !
—Wait, wait a bit. I'll come when I've lit the fire.
Merrr !
—Exactly.
Mé ! Mer ! Merrrrrrr ! ! !
—Tace, tu, crapa, bestia !
Merr-ererrr-ererrrr ! Merrrr !

She is such an alert listener, with her ears wide, to know am I coming !
Such a canny listener, from a distance, looking upwards, lending first one ear, then another.

There she is, perched on her manger, looking over the boards into the day
Like a belle at her window.
And immediately she sees me she blinks, stares, doesn't know me, turns her head and ignores me vulgarly with a wooden blank on her face.

What do I care for her, the ugly female, standing up there with her long tangled sides like an old rug thrown over a fence.
But she puts her nose down shrewdly enough v hen the knot is untied,
And jumps staccato to earth, a sharp, dry jump, still ignoring me,
Pretending to look round the stall.

Come on, you, crapa ! I'm not your servant !

She turns her head away with an obtuse, female sort of deafness, bête.
And then invariably she crouches her rear and makes water.
That being her way of answer, if I speak to her. — Self-conscious !
Le bestie non parlano, poverine !

She was bought at Giardini fair, on the sands, for six hundred lire.

An obstinate old witch, almost jerking the rope from my hands to eat the acanthus, or bite at the almond buds, and make me wait.
Yet the moment I hate her she trips mild and smug like a woman going to mass.
The moment I really detest her.

Queer it is, suddenly, in the garden
To catch sight of her standing like some huge, ghoulish grey bird in the air, on the bough of the leaning almond-tree,
Straight as a board on the bough, looking down like some hairy horrid God the Father in a William Blake imagination.
Come down, crapa, out of that almond-tree !

Instead of which she strangely rears on her perch in the air,
vast beast,
And strangely paws the air, delicate,
And reaches her black-striped face up like a snake, far up,
Subtly, to the twigs overhead, far up, vast beast,
And snaps them sharp, with a little twist of her anaconda head;
All her great hairy-shaggy belly open against the morning.

At seasons she curls back her tail like a green leaf in the fire,
Or like a lifted hand, hailing at her wrong end.
And having exposed the pink place of her nakedness, fixedly,
She trots on blithe toes,
And if you look at her, she looks back with a cold, sardonic
stare.
Sardonic, sardonyx, rock of cold fire.
See me? She says, *That's me!*

That's her.

Then she leaps the rocks like a quick rock,
Her backbone sharp as a rock,
Sheer will.

Along which ridge of libidinous magnetism
Defiant, curling the leaf of her tail as if she were curling her lip
behind her at all life,
Libidinous desire runs back and forth, asserting itself in that
little lifted bare hand.

Yet she has such adorable spurty kids, like spurts of black ink.
And in a month again is as if she had never had them.

And when the billy goat mounts her
She is brittle as brimstone.
While his slitted eyes squint back to the roots of his ears.

Taormina.

ELEPHANT

You go down shade to the river, where naked men sit on flat
brown rocks, to watch the ferry, in the sun ;
And you cross the ferry with the naked people, go up the
tropical lane
Through the palm-trees and past hollow paddy-fields where
naked men are threshing rice
And the monolithic water-buffaloes, like old, muddy stones
with hair on them, are being idle ;
And through the shadow of bread-fruit trees, with their dark
green, glossy, fanged leaves
Very handsome, and some pure yellow fanged leaves ;
Out into the open, where the path runs on the top of a dyke
between paddy-fields :
And there, of course, you meet a huge and mud-grey elephant
advancing his frontal bone, his trunk curled round a log
of wood :
So you step down the bank, to make way.

Shuffle, shuffle, and his little wicked eye has seen you as he
advances above you,
The slow beast curiously spreading his round feet for the dust.
And the slim naked man slips down, and the beast deposits the
lump of wood, carefully.
The keeper hooks the vast knee, the creature salaams.

White man, you are saluted.
Pay a few cents.

But the best is the Pera-hera, at midnight, under the tropical
stars,
With a pale little wisp of a Prince of Wales, diffident, up in a
small pagoda on the temple side

And white people in evening dress buzzing and crowding the stand upon the grass below and opposite :
And at last the Pera-hera procession, flambeaux aloft in the tropical night, of blazing cocoa-nut,
Naked dark men beneath,
And the huge frontal of three great elephants stepping forth to the tom-tom's beat, in the torch-light,
Slowly sailing in gorgeous apparel through the flame-light, in front of a towering, grimacing white image of wood.

The elephant bells striking slow, tong-tong, tong-tong,
To music and queer chanting :
Enormous shadow-processions filing on in the flare of fire
In the fume of cocoa-nut oil, in the sweating tropical night,
In the noise of the tom-toms and singers ;
Elephants after elephants curl their trunks, vast shadows, and some cry out
As they approach and salaam, under the dripping fire of the torches,
That pale fragment of a Prince up there, whose motto is *Ich dien*.

Pale, dispirited Prince, with his chin on his hands, his nerves tired out,
Watching and hardly seeing the trunk-curl approach and clumsy, knee-lifting salaam
Of the hugest, oldest of beasts in the night and the fire-flare below.
He is royalty, pale and dejected fragment up aloft.
And down below huge homage of shadowy beasts ; barefoot and trunk-lipped in the night.

Chieftains, three of them abreast, on foot
Strut like peg-tops, wound around with hundreds of yards of fine linen.
They glimmer with tissue of gold, and golden threads on a jacket of velvet,
And their faces are dark, and fat, and important.

They are royalty, dark-faced royalty, showing the conscious whites of their eyes
And stepping in homage, stubborn, to that nervous pale lad up there.

More elephants, tong, tong-tong, loom up,
Huge, more tassels swinging, more dripping fire of new cocoa-nut cressets
High, high flambeaux, smoking of the east ;
And scarlet hot embers of torches knocked out of the sockets among bare feet of elephants and men on the path in the dark.
And devil-dancers luminous with sweat, dancing on to the shudder of drums,
Tom-toms, weird music of the devil, voices of men from the jungle singing ;
Endless, under the Prince.

Towards the tail of the everlasting procession
In the long hot night, more dancers from insignificant villages,
And smaller, more frightened elephants.

Men-peasants from jungle villages dancing and running with sweat and laughing,
Naked dark men with ornaments on, on their naked arms and their naked breasts, the grooved loins
Gleaming like metal with running sweat as they suddenly turn, feet apart,
And dance, and dance, forever dance, with breath half sobbing in dark, sweat-shining breasts,
And lustrous great tropical eyes unveiled now, gleaming a kind of laugh,
A naked, gleaming dark laugh, like a secret out in the dark,
And flare of a tropical energy, tireless, afire in the dark, slim limbs and breasts,

Perpetual, fire-laughing motion, among the slow shuffle
Of elephants,
The hot dark blood of itself a-laughing, wet, half-devilish, men
all motion
Approaching under that small pavilion, and tropical eyes
dilated look up
Inevitably look up
To the Prince
To that tired remnant of royalty up there
Whose motto is *Ich dien*.

As if the homage of the kindled blood of the east
Went up in wavelets to him, from the breasts and eyes of jungle
torch-men,
And he couldn't take it.

What would they do, those jungle men running with sweat,
with the strange dark laugh in their eyes, glancing up,
And the sparse-haired elephants slowly following,
If they knew that his motto was *Ich dien* ?
And that he meant it.

They begin to understand.
The rickshaw boys begin to understand.
And then the devil comes into their faces,
But a different sort, a cold, rebellious, jeering devil.

In elephants and the east are two devils, in all men maybe.
The mystery of the dark mountain of blood, reeking in hom-
age, in lust, in rage,
And passive with everlasting patience,
Then the little, cunning pig-devil of the elephant's lurking eyes,
the unbeliever.

We dodged, when the Pera-hera was finished, under th
hanging, hairy pigs' tails
And the flat, flaccid mountains of the elephants' standin
haunches,
Vast-blooded beasts,
Myself so little dodging rather scared against the eterna
wrinkled pillars of their legs, as they were being dis
mantled ;
Then I knew they were dejected, having come to hear th
repeated
Royal summons : *Dient Ihr !*
Serve !
Serve, vast mountainous blood, in submission and splendour, serv
royalty.
Instead of which, the silent, fatal emission from that pal
shattered boy up there :
Ich dien.

That's why the night fell in frustration.
That's why, as the elephants ponderously, with unseemin
swiftness, galloped uphill in the night, going back to th
jungle villages,
As the elephant bells sounded tong-tong-tong, bell of th
temple of blood in the night, swift-striking,
And the crowd like a field of rice in the dark gave way lik
liquid to the dark
Looming gallop of the beasts,
It was as if the great bulks of elephants in the obscure ligh
went over the hill-brow swiftly, with their tails betwee
their legs, in haste to get away,
Their bells sounding frustrate and sinister.

And all the dark-faced, cotton-wrapped people, more numero
and whispering than grains of rice in a rice-field at nigh
All the dark-faced, cotton-wrapped people, a countless host
the shores of the lake, like thick wild rice by the wate
edge,

Waiting for the fireworks of the after-show,
As the rockets went up, and the glare passed over countless faces, dark as black rice growing,
Showing a glint of teeth, and glancing tropical eyes aroused in the night,
There was the faintest twist of mockery in every face, across the hiss of wonders as the rocket burst
High, high up, in flakes, shimmering flakes of blue fire, above the palm-trees of the islet in the lake,
O faces upturned to the glare, O tropical wonder, wonder, a miracle in heaven!
And the shadow of a jeer, of underneath disappointment, as the rocket-coruscation died, and shadow was the same as before.

They were foiled, the myriad whispering dark-faced cotton-wrapped people.
They had come to see royalty,
To bow before royalty, in the land of elephants, bow deep, bow deep.
Bow deep, for it's good as a draught of cool water to bow very, very low to the royal.

And all there was to bow to, a weary, diffident boy whose motto is *Ich dien.*
I serve! I serve! in all the weary irony of his mien—*'Tis I who serve!*
Drudge to the public.

I wish they had given the three feathers to me;
That I had been he in the pavilion, as in a pepper-box aloft and alone
To stand and hold feathers, three feathers above the world,
And say to them: *Dient Ihr! Dient!*
Omnes, vos omnes, servite.
Serve me, I am meet to be served.
Being royal of the gods.

And to the elephants :
First great beasts of the earth,
A prince has come back to you,
Blood-mountains.
Crook the knee and be glad.

Kandy.

KANGAROO

In the northern hemisphere
Life seems to leap at the air, or skim under the wind
Like stags on rocky ground, or pawing horses, or springy scut-tailed rabbits.

Or else rush horizontal to charge at the sky's horizon,
Like bulls or bisons or wild pigs.

Or slip like water slippery towards its ends,
As foxes, stoats, and wolves, and prairie dogs.

Only mice, and moles, and rats, and badgers, and beavers, and perhaps bears
Seem belly-plumbed to the earth's mid-navel.
Or frogs that when they leap come flop, and flop to the centre of the earth.

But the yellow antipodal Kangaroo, when she sits up,
Who can unseat her, like a liquid drop that is heavy, and just touches earth.

The downward drip
The down-urge.
So much denser than cold-blooded frogs.

Delicate mother Kangaroo
Sitting up there rabbit-wise, but huge, plumb-weighted,
And lifting her beautiful slender face, oh! so much more gently and finely lined than a rabbit's, or than a hare's,
Lifting her face to nibble at a round white peppermint drop, which she loves, sensitive mother Kangaroo.

Her sensitive, long, pure-bred face.
Her full antipodal eyes, so dark,
So big and quiet and remote, having watched so many empty dawns in silent Australia.

Her little loose hands, and drooping Victorian shoulders.
And then her great weight below the waist, her vast pale belly
With a thin young yellow little paw hanging out, and straggle of a long thin ear, like ribbon,
Like a funny trimming to the middle of her belly, thin little dangle of an immature paw, and one thin ear.

Her belly, her big haunches
And, in addition, the great muscular python-stretch of her tail.

There, she shan't have any more peppermint drops.
So she wistfully, sensitively sniffs the air, and then turns, goes off in slow sad leaps

On the long flat skis of her legs,
Steered and propelled by that steel-strong snake of a tail.

Stops again, half turns, inquisitive to look back.
While something stirs quickly in her belly, and a lean little face comes out, as from a window,
Peaked and a bit dismayed,
Only to disappear again quickly away from the sight of the world, to snuggle down in the warmth,
Leaving the trail of a different paw hanging out.

Still she watches with eternal, cocked wistfulness!
How full her eyes are, like the full, fathomless, shining eyes of an Australian black-boy
Who has been lost so many centuries on the margins of existence!

She watches with insatiable wistfulness.
Untold centuries of watching for something to come,
For a new signal from life, in that silent lost land of the South.

Where nothing bites but insects and snakes and the sun, small life.
Where no bull roared, no cow ever lowed, no stag cried, no leopard screeched, no lion coughed, no dog barked,
But all was silent save for parrots occasionally, in the haunted blue bush.

Wistfully watching, with wonderful liquid eyes.
And all her weight, all her blood, dripping sack-wise down towards the earth's centre,
And the live little-one taking in its paw at the door of her belly.

Leap then, and come down on the line that draws to the earth's deep, heavy centre.

Sydney.

BIBBLES

Bibbles,
Little black dog in New Mexico,
Little black snub-nosed bitch with a shoved-out jaw
And a wrinkled reproachful look ;
Little black female pup, sort of French bull, they say,
With bits of brindle coming through, like rust, to show you're not pure ;
Not pure, Bibbles,
Bubsey, bat-eared dog ;
Not black enough !

First live thing I've " owned " since the lop-eared rabbits when I was a lad,
And those over-prolific white mice, and Adolf, and Rex whom I didn't own.
And even now, Bibbles, little Ma'am, it's you who appropriated me, not I you.
As Benjamin Franklin appropriated Providence to his purposes.

Oh Bibbles, black little bitch,
I'd never have let you appropriate me, had I known.
I never dreamed, till now, of the awful time the Lord must have, " owning " humanity,
Especially democratic live-by-love humanity.

Oh Bibbles, oh Pips, oh Pipsey,
You little black love-bird !
Don't you love *everybody !*
Just everybody.
You love 'em all.
Believe in the One Identity, don't you,
You little Walt-Whitmanesque bitch ?

First time I lost you in Taos plaza,
And found you after endless chasing,
Came upon you prancing round the corner in exuberant, bibbling affection
After the black-green skirts of a yellow-green old Mexican woman
Who hated you, and kept looking round at you and cursing you in a mutter,
While you pranced and bounced with love of her, you indiscriminating animal,
All your wrinkled *miserere* Chinese black little face beaming
And your black little body bouncing and wriggling
With indiscriminate love, Bibbles ;
I had a moment's pure detestation of you.

As I rushed like an idiot round the corner after you
Yelling : ***Pips ! Pips ! Bibbles !***

I've had moments of hatred of you since,
Loving everybody !
" To you, whoever you are, with endless embrace ! "—
That's you, Pipsey,
With your imbecile bit of a tail in a love-flutter.
You omnipip.

Not that you're merely a softy, oh dear me, no.
You know which side your bread is buttered.
You don't care a rap for anybody.
But you love lying warm between warm human thighs, indiscriminate,
And you love to make somebody love you, indiscriminate,
You love to lap up affection, to wallow in it,
And then turn tail to the next comer, for a new dollop.

And start prancing and licking and cuddling again, indiscriminate.

Oh yes, I know your little game.

Yet you're so nice,
So quick, like a little black dragon.
So fierce, when the coyotes howl, barking like a whole little lion, and rumbling,
And starting forward in the dusk, with your little black fur all bristling like plush
Against those coyotes, who would swallow you like an oyster.

And in the morning, when the bedroom door is opened,
Rushing in like a little black whirlwind, leaping straight as an arrow on the bed at the pillow
And turning the day suddenly into a black tornado of *joie de vivre*, Chinese dragon.

So funny
Lobbing wildly through deep snow like a rabbit,
Hurtling like a black ball through the snow,
Champing it, tossing a mouthful,
Little black spot in the landscape !

So absurd
Pelting behind on the dusty trail when the horse sets off home at a gallop :
Left in the dust behind like a dust-ball tearing along,
Coming up on fierce little legs, tearing fast to catch up, a real little dust-pig, ears almost blown away,
And black eyes bulging bright in a dust-mask
Chinese-dragon-wrinkled, with a pink mouth grinning, under jaw shoved out
And white teeth showing in your dragon-grin as you race, you split-face,
Like a trundling projectile swiftly whirling up,

Cocking your eyes at me as you come alongside, to see if I'm
I on the horse,
And panting with that split grin,
All your game little body dust-smooth like a little pig, poor
Pips.

Plenty of game old spirit in you, Bibbles.
Plenty of game old spunk, little bitch.

How you hate being brushed with the boot-brush, to brush all
that dust out of your wrinkled face,
Don't you ?
How you hate being made to look undignified, Ma'am ;
How you hate being laughed at, Miss Superb !

Blackberry face !

Plenty of conceit in you.
Unblemished belief in your own perfection
And utter lovableness, you ugly-mug ;
Chinese puzzle-face,
Wrinkled underhung physiog that looks as if it had done with
everything,
Through with everything.

Instead of which you sit there and roll your head like a canary
And show a tiny bunch of white teeth in your underhung
blackness,
Self-conscious little bitch,
Aiming again at being loved.

Let the merest scallywag come to the door, and you leap your
very dearest love at him,
As if now, at last, here was the one you *finally* loved,
Finally loved ;
And even the dirtiest scallywag is taken in,
Thinking : *This dog sure has taken a fancy to me.*

You miserable little bitch of love-tricks,
I know your game.

Me or the Mexican who comes to chop wood
All the same,
All humanity is jam to you.

Everybody so dear, and yourself so ultra-beloved
That you have to run out at last and eat filth,
Gobble up filth, you horror, swallow utter abomination and
fresh-dropped dung.

You stinker.
You worse than a carrion-crow.
Reeking dung-mouth.
You love-bird.

Reject nothing, sings Walt Whitman.
So you, you go out at last and eat the unmentionable,
In your appetite for affection.

And then you run in to vomit it in my house !
I get my love back.
And I have to clean up after you, filth which even blind Nature
rejects
From the pit of your stomach ;
But you, you snout-face, you reject nothing, you merge so
much in love
You must eat even that.

Then when I dust you a bit with a juniper twig
You run straight away to live with somebody else,
Fawn before them, and love them as if they were the ones you
had *really* loved all along.
And they're taken in.
They feel quite tender over you, till you play the same trick on
them, dirty bitch.

Fidelity ! Loyalty ! Attachment !
Oh, these are abstractions to your nasty little belly.
You must always be a-waggle with LOVE.
Such a waggle of love you can hardly distinguish one human from another.

You love one after another, on one condition, that each one loves you most.
Democratic little bull-bitch, dirt-eating little swine.

But now, my lass, you've got Nemesis on your track,
Now you've come sex-alive, and the great ranch-dogs are all after you.
They're after what they can get, and don't you turn tail !
You loved 'em all so much before, didn't you, loved 'em indiscriminate.
You don't love 'em now.
They want something of you, so you squeak and come pelting indoors.

Come pelting to me, now the other folk have found you out, and the dogs are after you.
Oh yes, you're found out. I heard them kick you out of the ranch house.
Get out, you little, soft fool ! !

And didn't you turn your eyes up at me then ?
And didn't you cringe on the floor like any inkspot !
And crawl away like a black snail !
And doesn't everybody loathe you then !
And aren't your feelings violated, you high-bred little love-bitch !

For you're sensitive,
In many ways very finely bred.
But bred in conceit that the world is all for love

Of you, my bitch : till you get so far you eat filth.
Fool, in spite of your pretty ways, and quaint, know-all,
wrinkled old aunty's face.

So now, what with great Airedale dogs,
And a kick or two,
And a few vomiting bouts,
And a juniper switch,
You look at me for discrimination, don't you ?
Look up at me with misgiving in your bulging eyes,
And fear in the smoky whites of your eyes, you nigger ;
And you're puzzled,
You think you'd better mind your P's and Q's for a bit,
Your sensitive love-pride being all hurt.

All right, my little bitch.
You learn loyalty rather than loving,
And I'll protect you.

Lobo.

MOUNTAIN LION

Climbing through the January snow, into the Lobo canyon
Dark grow the spruce-trees, blue is the balsam, water sounds
still unfrozen, and the trail is still evident.

Men !
Two men !
Men ! The only animal in the world to fear !

They hesitate.
We hesitate.
They have a gun.
We have no gun.

Then we all advance, to meet.

Two Mexicans, strangers, emerging out of the dark and snow
and inwardness of the Lobo valley.
What are they doing here on this vanishing trail ?

What is he carrying ?
Something yellow.
A deer ?

Qué tiene, amigo ?
León—

He smiles, foolishly, as if he were caught doing wrong.
And we smile, foolishly, as if we didn't know.
He is quite gentle and dark-faced.

It is a mountain lion,
A long, long slim cat, yellow like a lioness.
Dead.

He trapped her this morning, he says, smiling foolishly.

Lift up her face,
Her round, bright face, bright as frost.
Her round, fine-fashioned head, with two dead ears ;
And stripes in the brilliant frost of her face, sharp, fine dark rays,
Dark, keen, fine rays in the brilliant frost of her face.
Beautiful dead eyes.

Hermoso es !

They go out towards the open ;
We go on into the gloom of Lobo.
And above the trees I found her lair,
A hole in the blood-orange brilliant rocks that stick up, a little cave.
And bones, and twigs, and a perilous ascent.

So, she will never leap up that way again, with the yellow flash of a mountain lion's long shoot !
And her bright striped frost-face will never watch any more, out of the shadow of the cave in the blood-orange rock,
Above the trees of the Lobo dark valley-mouth !

Instead, I look out.
And out to the dim of the desert, like a dream, never real ;
To the snow of the Sangre de Cristo mountains, the ice of the mountains of Picoris,
And near across at the opposite steep of snow, green trees motionless standing in snow, like a Christmas toy.

And I think in this empty world there was room for me
and a mountain lion.
And I think in the world beyond, how easily we might
spare a million or two of humans
And never miss them.
Yet what a gap in the world, the missing white frost-
face of that slim yellow mountain lion!

Lobo.

THE RED WOLF

Over the heart of the west, the Taos desert,
Circles an eagle,
And it's dark between me and him.

The sun, as he waits a moment, huge and liquid
Standing without feet on the rim of the far-off mesa
Says : *Look for a last long time then ! Look ! Look well ! I am going.*
So he pauses and is beholden, and straightway is gone.

And the Indian, in a white sheet
Wrapped to the eyes, the sheet bound close on his brows,
Stands saying : *See, I'm invisible !*
Behold how you can't behold me !
The invisible in its shroud !

Now that the sun has gone, and the aspen leaves
And the cotton-wood leaves are fallen, as good as fallen,
And the ponies are in corral,
And it's night.

Why, more has gone than all these ;
And something has come.
A red wolf stands on the shadow's dark red rim.

Day has gone to dust on the sage-grey desert
Like a white Christus fallen to dust from a cross ;
To dust, to ash, on the twilit floor of the desert.

And a black crucifix like a dead tree spreading wings ;
Maybe a black eagle with its wings out
Left lonely in the night
In a sort of worship.

And coming down upon us, out of the dark concave
Of the eagle's wings,
And the coffin-like slit where the Indian's eyes are,
And the absence of cotton-wood leaves, or of aspen,
Even the absence of dark-crossed donkeys :
Come tall old demons, smiling
The Indian smile,
Saying : *How do you do, you pale-face?*

I am very well, old demon.
How are you ?

Call me Harry if you will,
Call me Old Harry, says he.
Or the abbreviation of Nicolas,
Nick, Old Nick, maybe.

Well, you're a dark old demon,
And I'm a pale-face like a homeless dog
That has followed the sun from the dawn through the east,
Trotting east and east and east till the sun himself went home,
And left me homeless here in the dark at your door.
How do you think we'll get on,
Old demon, you and I ?

You and I, you pale-face,
Pale-face you and I
Don't get on.

Mightn't we try ?

Where's your God, you white one?
Where's your white God?

He fell to dust as the twilight fell,
Was fume as I trod
The last step out of the east.

Then you're a lost white dog of a pale-face,
And the day's now dead. . . .

Touch me carefully, old father,
My beard is red.

Thin red wolf of a pale-face,
Thin red wolf, go home.

I have no home, old father,
That's why I come.

We take no hungry stray from the pale-face . . .

Father, you are not asked.
I am come. I am here. The red-dawn-wolf
Sniffs round your place.
Lifts up his voice and howls to the walls of the
pueblo,
Announcing he's here.

The dogs of the dark pueblo
Have long fangs . . .

Has the red wolf trotted east and east and east
From the far, far other end of the day
To fear a few fangs ?

Across the pueblo river
That dark old demon and I
Thus say a few words to each other

And wolf, he calls me, and red.
I call him no names.
He says, however, he is Star-Road.
I say, he can go back the same gait.

As for me . . .
Since I trotted at the tail of the sun as far as ever
the creature went west,
And lost him here,
I'm going to sit down on my tail right here
And wait for him to come back with a new story.
I'm the red wolf, says the dark old father.
All right, the red-dawn-wolf I am.

Taos.

GHOSTS

MEN IN NEW MEXICO

Mountains blanket-wrapped
Round a white hearth of desert—

While the sun goes round
And round and round the desert,
The mountains never get up and walk about.
They can't, they can't wake.

They camped and went to sleep
In the last twilight
Of Indian gods ;
And they can't wake.

Indians dance and run and stamp—
No good.
White men make gold-mines and the mountains unmake them
In their sleep.

The Indians laugh in their sleep
From fear,
Like a man when he sleeps and his sleep is over, and he can't
wake up,
And he lies like a log and screams and his scream is silent
Because his body can't wake up ;
So he laughs from fear, pure fear, in the grip of the sleep.

A dark membrane over the will, holding a man down
Even when the mind has flickered awake ;
A membrane of sleep, like a black blanket.

We walk in our sleep, in this land,
Somnambulist wide-eyed afraid.

We scream for someone to wake us
And our scream is soundless in the paralysis of sleep,
And we know it.

The Penitentes lash themselves till they run with blood
In their efforts to come awake for one moment;
To tear the membrane of this sleep . . .
No good.

The Indians thought the white man would awake them . . .
And instead, the white men scramble asleep in the mountains,
And ride on horseback asleep forever through the desert,
And shoot one another, amazed and mad with somnambulism,
Thinking death will awaken something . . .
No good.

Born with a caul,
A black membrane over the face,
And unable to tear it,
Though the mind is awake.

Mountains blanket-wrapped
Round the ash-white hearth of the desert;
And though the sun leaps like a thing unleashed in the sky
They can't get up, they are under the blanket.

Taos.

AUTUMN AT TAOS

Over the rounded sides of the Rockies, the aspens of autumn,
The aspens of autumn,
Like yellow hair of a tigress brindled with pines.

Down on my hearth-rug of desert, sage of the mesa,
An ash-grey pelt
Of wolf all hairy and level, a wolf's wild pelt.

Trot-trot to the mottled foot-hills, cedar-mottled and piñon ;
Did you ever see an otter ?
Silvery-sided, fish-fanged, fierce-faced, whiskered, mottled.

When I trot my little pony through the aspen-trees of the
canyon,
Behold me trotting at ease betwixt the slopes of the golden
Great and glistening-feathered legs of the hawk of Horus ;
The golden hawk of Horus
Astride above me.

But under the pines
I go slowly
As under the hairy belly of a great black bear.

Glad to emerge and look back
On the yellow, pointed aspen-trees laid one on another like
feathers,
Feather over feather on the breast of the great and golden
Hawk as I say of Horus.

Pleased to be out in the sage and the pine fish-dotted foot-hills,
Past the otter's whiskers,
On to the fur of the wolf-pelt that strews the plain.

And then to look back to the rounded sides of the squatting
Rockies,
Tigress brindled with aspen,
Jaguar-splashed, puma-yellow, leopard-livid slopes of America.

Make big eyes, little pony,
At all these skins of wild beasts ;
They won't hurt you.

Fangs and claws and talons and beaks and hawk-eyes
Are nerveless just now.
So be easy.

Taos.

SPIRITS SUMMONED WEST

England seems full of graves to me,
Full of graves.

Women I loved and cherished, like my mother;
Yet I had to tell them to die.

England seems covered with graves to me,
Women's graves.

Women who were gentle
And who loved me
And whom I loved
And told to die.

Women with the beautiful eyes of the old days,
Belief in love, and sorrow of such belief.
"Hush, my love, then, hush.
Hush, and die, my dear!"

Women of the older generation, who knew
The full doom of loving and not being able to take back.
Who understood at last what it was to be told to die.

Now that the graves are made, and covered;
Now that in England pansies and such-like grow on the graves of women;
Now that in England is silence, where before was a moving of soft-skirted women,
Women with eyes that were gentle in olden belief in love;
Now then that all their yearning is hushed, and covered over with earth.

England seems like one grave to me.

And I, I sit on this high American desert
With dark-wrapped Rocky Mountains motionless squatting around in a ring,
Remembering I told them to die, to sink into the grave in England,
The gentle-kneed women.

So now I whisper : *Come away,*
Come away from the place of graves, come west,
Women,
Women whom I loved and told to die.

Come back to me now,
Now the divided yearning is over ;
Now you are husbandless indeed, no more husband to cherish like a child
And wrestle with for the prize of perfect love.
No more children to launch in a world you mistrust.
Now you need know in part
No longer, or carry the burden of a man on your heart,
Or the burden of Man writ large.

Now you are disemburdened of Man and a man
Come back to me.
Now you are free of the toils of a would-be-perfect love
Come to me and be still.

Come back then, you who were wives and mothers
And always virgins
Overlooked.

Come back then, mother, my love, whom I told to die.
It was only I who saw the virgin you
That had no home.

The overlooked virgin,
My love.

You overlooked her too.

Now that the grave is made of mother and wife,
Now that the grave is made and lidded over with turf:

Come, delicate, overlooked virgin, come back to me
And be still,
Be glad.

I didn't tell you to die, for nothing.
I wanted the virgin you to be home at last
In my heart.

Inside my innermost heart,
Where the virgin in woman comes home to a man.

The homeless virgin
Who never in all her life could find the way home
To that difficult innermost place in a man.

Now come west, come home,
Women I've loved for gentleness,
For the virginal you.
Find the way now that you never could find in life,
So I told you to die.

Virginal first and last
Is woman.
Now at this last, my love, my many a love,
You whom I loved for gentleness,
Come home to me.

They are many, and I loved them, shall always love them,
And they know it,
The virgins.
And my heart is glad to have them at last.

Now that the wife and mother and mistress is buried in earth,
In English earth,
Come home to me, my love, my loves, my many loves,
Come west to me.

For virgins are not exclusive of virgins
As wives are of wives ;
And motherhood is jealous,
But in virginity jealousy does not enter.

Taos.

THE AMERICAN EAGLE

The dove of Liberty sat on an egg
And hatched another eagle.

But didn't disown the bird.

Down with all eagles! cooed the Dove.
And down all eagles began to flutter, reeling from their perches:
Eagles with two heads, eagles with one, presently eagles with none
Fell from the hooks and were dead.

Till the American Eagle was the only eagle left in the world.

Then it began to fidget, shifting from one leg to the other,
Trying to look like a pelican,
And plucking out of his plumage a few loose feathers to feather the nests of all
The new naked little republics come into the world.

But the feathers were, comparatively, a mere flea-bite.
And the bub-eagle that Liberty had hatched was growing a startling big bird
On the roof of the world;
A bit awkward, and with a funny squawk in his voice,
His mother Liberty trying always to teach him to coo
And him always ending with a yawp
Coo! Coo! Coo! Coo-ark! Coo-ark! Quark!! Quark!!
Yawp!!!

So he clears his throat, the young Cock-eagle!

Now if the lilies of France lick Solomon in all his glory ;
And the leopard cannot change his spots ;
Nor the British lion his appetite ;
Neither can a young Cock-eagle sit simpering
With an olive-sprig in his mouth.

It's not his nature.

The big bird of the Amerindian being the eagle,
Red Men still stick themselves over with bits of his fluff,
And feel absolutely IT.

So better make up your mind, American Eagle,
Whether you're a sucking dove, *Roo—coo—ooo ! Quark ! Yawp ! !*
Or a pelican
Handing out a few loose golden breast-feathers, at moulting time ;
Or a sort of prosperity-gander
Fathering endless ten-dollar golden eggs.

Or whether it actually is an eagle you are,
With a Roman nose
And claws not made to shake hands with,
And a Me-Almighty eye.

The new Proud Republic
Based on the mystery of pride.
Overweening men, full of power of life, commanding a teeming obedience.

Eagle of the Rockies, bird of men that are masters,
Lifting the rabbit-blood of the myriads up into something splendid,
Leaving a few bones ;

Opening great wings in the face of the sheep-faced ewe
Who is losing her lamb,
Drinking a little blood, and loosing another royalty
unto the world.

Is that you, American Eagle ?

Or are you the goose that lays the golden egg ?
Which is just a stone to anyone asking for meat.
And are you going to go on for ever
Laying that golden egg,
That addled golden egg ?

Lobo.

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